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# The gene of independence

By Noel Annan

**BARBARA STRACHEY:**  
*Remarkable Relations*  
 The Story of the Pearsall Smith Family  
 354pp. Collins. £9.95.  
 0 575 02823 8

Barbara Strachey has written a work of defiance. Year after year through their diaries, letters and biographies the Stephen and Strachey families have imposed upon us their view of their exogamous relations. Virginia Woolf so craved parthenogenesis that any creature who dared to marry a Stephen exposed itself to a belittling aside: even her nephews, fond as she was of them, undoubtedly suffered in her eyes from being Bells. And what could those who married Stracheys be but mere addenda? "The Stracheys are most strongly the children of their fathers, not of their mothers", one who married into that clan admitted. "It does not matter whom they marry." Yet here is a family which married into both Stephens and Stracheys and which could hand out as much as they took. What was more it was a family whose vitality descended through its women: the men were quietists, the women independent spirits never humbled at the worst of times even when they chose tigers as mates.

The Pearsall Smith family was American. Nor is that surprising. What other country in Victorian times produced women who were not only handsome, beautiful or fetching but independent, willing to engage with men on equal terms, frank, amused and amusing? England could produce marvellous birds of prey such as Florence Nightingale or Beatrice Webb, but the struggle to break the bars of their cage seemed to unsex them. Trollope, sensitive as always to the changes in upper-class life, ends the *Fatherland* novels with the drama of the heir to the Duke of Omnium dispossessing his father but the end winning him round to his decision to marry an American. It is hardly surprising that Henry James - the connoisseur of how Americans obtained the entrée - became a somewhat wary friend of the family.

The Pearsall Smiths obtained their entrée through the evangelical movement. Hannah and Robert were both birthright Quakers from Philadelphia. But both broke out of that pure but narrow community, she moved by the Spirit, after marriage, to learn Greek and mathematics, he less concerned about the Truth than with communicating to other souls the turbulent religious emotions provoked by the study of the Bible and by hymn-singing. He became a famous preacher and she did so. They left the Society of Friends; they were baptised; and Hannah discovered the Motherhood of God by which she meant among other things that one was entitled to believe in the larger Hope. But for her there was a consolation: all sinners and not merely she Elect can be saved; it is not our duty to discover some infallible method of avoiding sin? Sanctification had to succeed justification.

But there was an ominous strain in Robert Pearsall Smith's family. They produced manic-depressives. Life became somewhat hectic when his brother Horace entered what was called one of his happy moods; and Robert, whose demonic energy astonished his admirers, collapsed when a favourite son died in adolescence. During his convalescence Robert and Hannah set off to England and got swept into the evangelical revival which was at that time in full spate. But whereas other American revivalists such as Moody and Sankey were regarded as somewhat naive and vulgar, the manners of the Pearsall Smiths, whose children and cousins were going to East Coast colleges, opened the doors of the pious nobility: Lady Mount Temple invited them to hold meetings at Broadlands, Mr Gladstone conversed at breakfast about backsliding and all was set for Robert, whose powers as a preacher won widespread admiration, to give the keynote address at what was to be the first historic Keswick meeting. And then the blow fell. Some of his illustrations of the doctrine of Sanctification displayed unmistakable signs of Antinomianism.

What happened was sketched with characteristic irony by his son, Logan, in one of the best autobiographies of a late Victorian childhood, *Unforgotten Years*. Sanctification has always been a deceptively pleasant doctrine. For if the justified sinner is armed against sin, what need he fear, now that temptation is a thing of the past, when he finds himself in situations in which frailer souls would fall and perish? Robert had been treated after his collapse by a Dr Foster who in his clinic spread the glad tidings that these sexual sensations, which had been supposed by the faithful to be manifestations of the Devil, in fact emanated from the Holy Ghost. The glad tidings were in fact a variant of that perennial temptation to share their best with the Gibbon describes in his fifteenth chapter. This time it was not the virgins of the warm climate of Africa who, declaring that they were invulnerable against the assaults of the flesh, permitted priests and doctors to share their best with the result that insulted Nature's time those most assured that the Spirit was moving mightily among them, argued that if Christ was the

continues to be disagreeable, we can be sure it is not the right task for us."

Strange to say her mother did not condemn this brisk advocacy of hedonism. Although Hannah remained a Christian, her capacity for steam-rolling those who got in her way now took the form of seeing that nobody must thwart anything which a member of her family wanted. "She was", wrote her niece, "the most completely honest woman, grand and noble in many ways... only deluded in two things, her slavish devotion and her Christianity". So whatever Mary did, Hannah stood by her. She argued herself into accepting that Mary had fallen in love with her Balliol beau, a Roman Catholic barrister, Frank Costelloe. She argued herself out of the indissolubility of marriage when Mary fell out of love with him and was willing to abandon her two daughters rather than be separated from her new love, Bernhard Berenson. Mary settled down to a lifetime of working, writing, bargaining, smuggling and quarrelling with BB, incapable of not having, whenever she saw fit, a flirtation (once with her

to antiques, making friends and quarrelling with them, and schooling himself to write perfect prose. He was quite right in thinking that in his final collection of *Trials*, he had left a faint but indelible impression upon English letters which conveyed his humour, his feline malice, his disillusion - and his failings.

In the last days of the century Frank Costelloe died, having made a will to ensure that his daughters were brought up as Catholics and not by their mother. It was foisted, and Hannah got legal control of them. By now she was deep into politics and getting younger every day. What could be more modern than: "I am just off to attend a meeting to protest. What I am to protest about, I have no idea, but I feel in a tremendously protesting mood?" She enjoyed living up to her grandchildren and matched their zeal. Yes, we did rejoice in the assassination of the Grand Duke, and we only hope there will be some more, was an odd sentiment from a birthright Quaker. However, she drew the line at murdering Mr Asquith and admitted her relief that her suffragette grandchild Ray did not belong to that wing of the movement whose only

as psychoanalysts. They would become so absorbed in argument about their cases that when they took up dingly sailing, for which they had no talent, they would run aground on mud flats and have to wait for the tide to lift them off next morning.

And so the book moves to the great-grandchildren. The Stephens girls remained paragons of radicalism and unconventionality, the younger like her mother also being couched by Bertrand Russell in philosophy. The only grandson was unmistakably a Strachey in voice, manners and intelligence - he became the first professor of computer science at Oxford. But the favourite among the elder generation was the first, the author of this book, a clear descendant of Hannah, who despising the university laurels which now came almost of right to her family, opted for the university of life, sailed on a windjammer to Australia and contracted, as she puts it, a rash marriage with the man who was a Finn. (Her brother Christopher used to say that this drew from Oliver and Ray after some anxious consultation a telegram urging delay which began "Marriage rather a serious horse"). Whatever else she inherited from the two sides of her family, she inherited their ability to construct a look and write admirable prose. No praise can be too high for the way she handles the masses of letters and sustains a narrative. Nor can any extracts give more than an indication of the richness of her dead-pan humour, her sympathy with even the most maddening of her kinsmen's follies and her invariably just and sensible judgments.

Barbara Strachey ends by writing an elegy. We see in the Second World War and its aftermath the extinction of Hannah's and Mary's children. We see Mary, always in pain separated from BB who was in hiding in Nazi-occupied Italy, slowly dying and sending her to sleep by reciting lists of people who had died before her. Ray had died before she did; and Knox and Adrian did not long survive her - Knox killing himself, as she felt the dread family disease of manic-depression enveloping her. Logan, too, was its victim. During the 1930s he had written most of his best books and developed into a literary giant, forever looking for a young Samuel who would succeed him as the prophet of correct and elegant language. But his outpouring of eccentricities turned bitter; he disinherited Bob Gathorne-Hardy who had sustained him for many years, and he was on the point of turning out his sister, Alys, who kept house for him for thirty-five years, when he died, a cunning-looking old man whose teeth were worn away to the gums. Alys, who had prayed for the stricken with success, when Russell left her and then, when she was, survived, Alys the last to say, then and then, unselfish, living for others, was at last given a blessing. She had written to Russell to congratulate him, on the 24th, and he invited her to lunch. "For the first time since June 1902 I want to live... Now I feel I shall freely see him again, and to love him freely is too wonderful." For the last year in her life they saw each other, she radiant with joy. "I am a lucky woman," she wrote, "and if I have suffered I have been worthwhile." She died unaware that he was intending to marry for the fourth time.

What will be left of the Pearsall Smith strain in the next century? Will the passion, the sober certainty of waking bliss, the willfulness and independence of mind continue to be recognizable. Or will those old Quaker virtues become indistinguishable from the conventional self-righteousness of the intelligentsia? Who can say? But one characteristic - that which descended through the family line. Cycling in Italy with Bertie, Alys, naturally, "in bloomers", heard an approving comment from a man in a town where they stopped: "Certe costume di gemelle". These colour-narr legs, which descended from Hannah through each generation to her great-granddaughters, may in the end prove to be the most enduring and unmistakable family birthright.



Whittall women: Mary, Hannah and Alys, 1898: from the book reviewed here.

Bridegroom of his Church was he not less the bridegroom of those within it, limiting within that same striding as an earthly spouse might do? And if so, should not his ministers, as his representatives on earth, prepare the ladies in their flock for this spiritual awakening?

Hannah had some inkling of what her husband was up to. When she tells me of the pecking of thy kind young deaconesses and thy enjoyment of it, is only another proof of the radical differences in our natures... she wrote him. Run, our began to circulate; and then Robert was told that he must immediately cease preaching and under no account appear at Keswick. He fled shattered to Paris.

It will become our credulous times to mock. What are we to say when in our universities, which have supplanted the churches as the arbiters of morals, professors, luminaries of societies formed to defend academic freedom, encourage students to disrupt lectures by other scholars. Zeal is the parent of self-deception. It says much for Victorian tolerance, or at least a sensible propensity to sweep gossip under the carpet, that ten years later the couple were back in London, received everywhere and finding Jowett willing to preside in the hall of Balliol at the wedding breakfast of their elder daughter.

Their father, like some brightly coloured but spent male insect, dwindled into obscurity, occasionally in a manic mood, endangering his family's equanimity by investing fifty thousand dollars of their capital in dud mines, but glad to entertain, to the horror of his neighbours, Walt Whitman whom his daughter had discovered. Mary had inherited her father's gift for preaching - and also his antinomianism. He had given her the duty of self-development. "If after giving a fair trial, any particular task

brother-in-law) or an affair or two, but remaining for ever engaging to some, maddening to many, but her independent true self.

Her sister, Alys, was all that Mary was not: dutiful, devoted to good works and a beauty. A seventeen-year-old schoolboy fell in love with her at first sight. This was Bertrand Russell and in the years they were married he changed from a shy, unworried, grisham and insecure boy into the familiar figure who left her for Ottoline Morrell. Unluckily Alys could not change. She had adopted all his ideas in an instant and remained hopelessly in love with him for the rest of her life, always believing that he would come back, bitterly regretting the days when he was unknown and writing *Principia Mathematica*, to her the greatest years of his life. Barbara Strachey conveys, with great skill and truthfulness, Russell's change of heart and his loss of love of Hannah, for whom no words were too venomous, but she does not conceal the cold-blooded brutality with which this fabulous and ruthless egoist - it will become him to call Hannah a hypocrite - threw Alys aside.

In so doing he was to make an enemy for life. Logan, when the family moved finally to London, decided to follow his Harvard career by taking a degree at Balliol. There he at last escaped from the overpowering female company of his youth and the monotony of worldliness became a congenial bachelor. "My idea of a happy ending to a love story," he wrote, "is to begin at the engagement where the luck writer ends, and show how the couple escape from the storms and wild beasts back into the safe harbour of celibacy." It was at Balliol that he met his best friend, Philip Morrell, but for his sister's sake he broke with the Morrells and made the most of a satisfying hate. He now devoted his life

hesitation lay in deciding who was to be the martyr willing to mount the scaffold.

Meanwhile Mary was determined to turn her daughters into the cultured art-loving social successes that she had longed to be at their age. But she had at least met her match. Ray's indifference to clothes was as heroic proportions. She went to a fancy-dress ball as a potato sack wearing a potato sack. Later in life when off to a grand party at Lady Astor's her own daughter warned her that her evening dress was as side out "Ploof No one will notice," she said. Nobody did. She had found a congenial family in the Stracheys where no one paid the slightest attention to anything she said, did or wore, and eventually she proposed to Oliver Strachey as she put it, "between the sewage station and the lunatic asylum at Littlemore, a place so romantic that it couldn't be avoided." Oliver was a quietist who wished for no career other than that which he followed in the secret service as a cryptographer - satisfying but ill-paid. They suited each other.

Her sister, Karin, had a less happy life. As a child she wept that everyone loved Ray more than her, and five operations on her ear left her deaf and disfigured. She compensated by adopting a hearty gregarious manner of speech full of schoolboy slang, and she wept again at the cruelty of Bloomsbury who indicated in their spine-chilling manner that, wife of Adrian Stephen as she might have become, she was not one of them. She had, however, a Pearsall Smith brain. Tutors at Newnham by Bertrand Russell she got a distinction in the Tripos, the first ever to be awarded to a woman in philosophy. Banned from I Tatt by BB for "holistic pacifism" the Stephens decided both to become medically qualified in order after the war to practice




















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0 906908 28 0

We are used to children's drawings. We see them on the walls of schools and homes, on book covers and even on cereal packets. Painting and drawing seem as much part of childhood as milkteeth. But child art was not always accepted in this way. As Howard Gardner writes in this book: "One looks in vain through prehistory, classical accounts, and even writings of the time of the Renaissance for conclusive evidence that children drew, let alone that such drawing mattered." There are just two exceptions: a child's state bearing a figure which survives from Minoan times, and a sixteenth century portrait, by Caroto, of a boy holding a child's drawing of a man.

Interest in children's drawings grew with the gradual recognition of childhood itself. But there is surprisingly little significant literature on the subject. One great exception is the work of Vygotsky. Kellogg, a self-taught, American school-teacher who collected hundreds of thousands of children's drawings from all over the world and developed systematic classifications of their elements. Kellogg saw that children's art went through stages (characterized by specific forms and combinations of forms) which varied with age and development rather than culture. Certain features, like the achievement of the mandala (a roughly circular shape crossed with lines) seemed to her to be almost universal.

But study of children's drawings has been divided between two main camps. One is interested in interpreting drawings as a means of access into the child's inner world. (Jungians have done some particularly woolly work of this kind.) But this sort of approach rarely manifests much interest in children's drawing as such. On the other hand, cognitive psychologists have studied such things as organization, sequence and the principles of thought and conservatism in child art. (Jacqueline Goodnow's *Children's Drawing* is a summary of such research.) Clearly, it is of some interest to ask such questions as whether a child who learns a language which runs from right to left across the page also works the other way around the clock when attaching arms and legs to a circular figure. Nonetheless, I have never been able to convince myself that it is of much interest.

Rudolf Arnheim is one writer who has fallen into neither of these two camps. But he is really interested in children's drawings as a psychology of art. For example, a young child will draw a figure as a circle, with arms and legs immediately attached. Arnheim argues that the child is drawing a complete figure, "leaving off" the body. Such a view certainly fits well with Gestalt preconceptions, but it leaves out of account the disproportionate expressive significance of the face, which is reflected not just in the earliest experiences of infancy but also in the earliest attempts at artistic expression.

Howard Gardner is a pupil of Arnheim's, for whom he has full respect. But his own approach to children's drawings is only understood in terms of the development of the child as a whole. Although a cognitive psychologist by training, he therefore concentrates on what have hitherto been relatively ignored aspects of children's art. These include the reasons why child drawing follows its characteristic course; the precise relations between the child and other aspects of mental, social and emotional development; and the aesthetic status of child art.

However, having set himself such a promising project, Gardner manages, in both, to thoroughly, take the way in which he handles the comparison between child and adult art. Desmond Morris was among the first to compare the developmental sequence of children's drawings with that of adult art, and who is taught to paint. Mor-

ris found that when child and adult were between one and a half and three years old their work followed very similar trajectories; they then very quickly began to diverge just before those developments which, in the child, led to the first representations.

Recently, however, Morris's findings have been challenged by the (to me) unconvincing claims of two researchers that their ape, Majan, has been making "representational" works. Clearly, all this is gripping stuff: it promises to throw more and more light on the nature and origins of the specifically human capacity for expressive symbolism. But how does Gardner deal with such a novel issue? He gestures, vaguely, in the direction of the conflicting research and then comments, unhelpfully, "We may well want to retain some skepticism about the testimony of young Majan, but it would be a bold scientist indeed who would dare to bar chimpanzees forever from the world of representational art!" Again and again at those critical points when one wants exposition and argument to all that Gardner can offer is rhetoric or sentiment.

Indeed, Gardner has an almost pathological wish to accommodate everyone's points of view, even when they are at odds with each other. For example, for most of the book, he appears to accept, at least in developmental sequence. It thus comes as a considerable shock to discover on page 159 that Gardner is aware of work by a cultural anthropologist, Alexander Alland, which is entirely at odds with Kellogg's (like the mandala) and suggests that cultural factors are decisive even in works by the youngest children. Gardner reproduces three pictures (presumably provided by Alland) by children from Bali, Taiwan, and Japan, which, at first glance, tend to confirm this thesis.

Now, if Alland is right, all the "classical" work which has been done in this field will be effectively rendered obsolete. Gardner, however, refers to his findings as just another interesting opinion among

many. Unfortunately, the reader has no way of arriving at a just assessment of the provocative nature of this footnote. Professor Alland told him about his findings in conversation. Moreover, information is given neither about the ages of the three youngsters who made the culture-ridden paintings, nor about how their work was selected. My own guess (and it can be no better than that) is that these are exceptional works, carefully selected to "make a point", whereas Kellogg, of course, based his findings on truly massive samples.

Gardner is very much more convincing when he is dealing with questions of the value of copying. Copying has been out of favour in art education in recent years, but Gardner argues that, if it is introduced at a certain stage of development, and not over-rightly imposed, it can provide an important bridge between drawing as a "natural" expressive activity and participation in the pictorial tradition of one's own culture. As someone who has had reason to question the laissez faire liberalism of art education over the past two decades (which has led to severe erosion of basic skills) I read Gardner's views with relief.

If a hundred years ago, child art was ignored, and it is often held up as the model of all artistic activity. Yet the expressive materials of the successful adult artist include culturally given pictorial conventions. Copying is one of the means through which one can become acquainted with them. But, having made this point, Gardner is also right to raise the issue of the exceptions: those rare prodigies who seem to short-circuit the routes to skills given only by acquaintance with tradition, and to acquire them as natural facilities. A famous example is that of Nadia, an autistic child who suddenly began to produce fluent drawings of animals and human figures using elaborate graphic devices that can usually only be acquired through elaborate training. However, nothing of significance is added to the liter-

ature on Nadia with Gardner's suggestion that she "may have been operating with a high-powered mental computational device—perhaps, in fact, exploited by a sample of the human species".

Even less satisfactory are those parts of this book in which Gardner attempts an aesthetic analysis of child art. Gardner clearly does not know much about aesthetic theory and has chosen to entangle theory with the argument put forward by Sigmund Freud that there has been consistent progress in Western art. Miss Gahlke apparently believes the contemporary conceptual, linguistic, and systematic art forms which do not make use of pictures are actually better than, say, the work of Raphael or Leonardo, which are the child, away from primitive "iconic" towards linguistic modes. All this is, I believe, middle-headed nonsense, and if you begin a discussion on the aesthetics of child art by considering such a thing as a drawing, you are in the way of the child. The aesthetic value of a drawing is in the way that it like wild flowers than for a reasons we find, say, Poussin aesthetically satisfying?

I believe that an interesting book could have been written of the child art which Gardner promised, but failed to deliver. His work is weak because although he says he is going to situate children's art in the context of the child's development as a whole, he has an impoverished conception of such development. It seems to know little of the early work of Professor Vygotsky on the development of perception, for example. Moreover, he does not begin to discuss the "aesthetic matrix" of child art and its relationship to the researches of British and American theorists, like Donald Winnicott, Murray Miller and Charles Rycroft, on symbolic play and on the way in which children's art is a reflection of child art and its relation specifically human biology.

There is much information, however, that can be used by children when they are still young. We tell the parents who give the book to their offspring and the children themselves that it is a book to be read in the bath, or at bedtime, or when they are bored. And, if they spot any children coming each others' bodies for lice and fleas and accuse them of acting like "little monkeys" they will soon be put right. Monkeys do not look for insects but tiny bits of salt from perspiration which they pop into their mouths, bacteria and all so doubt.

*Polar Bears Like It Hot* is an American book and British readers of any age are presented with a number of misconceptions about things which, in all probability, they never had conceptions of. They will probably have heard of the Chicago, but it is not the city that it was started by Mrs. O'Leary's cow and they would not be able to chew their way through the problem of whether a Baby Ruth bar player or President George Cleveland's eldest daughter, even if they had their teeth in one.

But this does not make the book less useful. Knowledge for many is not the dedicated eradication of ignorance, but an important ingredient in one-upmanship. That you know something, that someone else has heard of it, is satisfying, but pointing out to someone that they have not completely the wrong idea about it is more pleasing. The us latent pedagogical dictators of this pneumaticmultimicroscopicist-covetousness is the longest word in the dictionary is greater when the Mary Poppins-besotted boy next door thinks that it is "supercalifragilisticexpialidocious", which is a neologism.

Not all of Mr. Rosenbloom's entries have the complete certainty of gospel truth. (And if you are worried about the truth of the Bible when it talks of the voice of the turtle in Song of Songs, the turtle stands for turtle dove.) But then it would be a great misconception if the reader were to think that every word in a book like this was indisputably true.

## Misconceiving the world

By Andrew Hislop

JOSEPH ROSENBLUM:

Polar Bears Like It Hot

Illustrated by Joyce Rich

Oak Tree Press. £3.50.

0 8069 4612 1

If you see a man go grey overnight because his wife has been sucked to death by a vampire bat, or find a wolf ecstatic because he has left his mistress, or hear the neighbour's polar bear complaining about the heat, you're dreaming or Hollywood (which is not a city, California) has got it wrong again. For Mr. Rosenbloom, the author of a guide to popular misconceptions, shouldn't always get it right.

At least, if the weight of their ignorance is too atrocious, they know that it's not the sweat of their twisted brow that offends their nostrils but more of that bacteria going to work on their heads of perspiration. And, have gone right off these microscopically little perils. Mr. Rosenbloom tells us that not all of them are harmful—some turn into sensible milk into yoghurt which, when kept down in the stomach, is digested with the help of bacteria.

Further vital information for future years is provided by Mr. Rosenbloom. No young male reader of this book is likely to start maniacally cutting or scrupulously eschew washing his hair to avoid going bald; or leave the rat race in the hope that he will live longer than his wife ("In all societies, civilized or primitive, women live longer than men" or "well, concede in the old people's home that women score more than men).

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## The Two Sisters

Anonymous Lucy of the locket  
Sugared packet after pocket  
With the sweetness of her glance  
Which promised all an equal chance.

But Emma had her portrait made  
And openly such scorn displayed  
That from those shafts of pure contempt  
Not one poor sutor felt exempt.

Yes, Lucy was the nicer girl,  
Good for each temporary whirl,  
Yet strange how many men prefer  
A supercilious hauteur.

John Mole

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## King for a day

By Sarah Hayes

CLIVE KING:  
Ninny's Boat  
Kestrel. £4.95.  
0 7226 5617 3

Clive King is a plain speaker. His story, though set in the fifth century and buzzing with historical and mythological references, is surprisingly direct and approachable. Unlike other tales of the Dark Ages, this one is quite free of doom-laden atmospherics. Flood, sword and the morte d'Arthur: giant all taken as a matter of course and not weighed down with turgid description.

In language Mr King is outrageously anachronistic, but this is part of his method and part of the charm of his agreeable book. His stylistic approach which uses modern metaphors and timeless rhymes and riddles to make the reader understand what he might have felt like to live in the fifth century—at the expense, perhaps, of historical authenticity. Though genuine information is subtly conveyed, this is as much adventure story as history.

The book's main strength derives from the nature of the hero and narrator. Ninny is a runt, black-haired outcast, enslaved by the feudal folk of the Angles and the Angles call the Isles of Ocean and the despicable reader will soon recognize to be Britain. Ninny has never known what is going on; he is constantly making a fool of himself; and he is irresistible.

## Future darkness

By Holly Eley

VIRGINIA HAMILTON:  
Dustland  
Julia MacRae Books. £4.95.  
0 86203 080 3

After a cursory listing of characters, *Dustland* begins:

This was the second day that the unit had been out of its own time and into the first day had been uneventful, yet it had been a frightful day. Because in its first attempt at mind jumping, the unit appeared to have travelled into a place of endless, gritty dust. It could distinguish no landmarks, no animals, no humans. But it divined instantly what must be the scariest commodity if such land were inhabited. It named the place Dustland.

and so unproblematically continues, for two thirds of the book The Dwarves, Worlmas, Slekens, the Bannabans and Misics who live between night and daylight are less than menacing, often as grey as their maker. The four children who make up the unit, Thomas, Levi, Justice and Dorien, and who in their encounter with "the future"

ible. Furthermore in good folk-love tradition, the fool not only survives his disasters but triumphs in the end. Ninny has a practical approach to life: how to keep warm and food, stay out of the way, and have a bit of fun at the same time—these are his modest aims. But it does not happen quite like that.

Will Ninny be king for a day or a slave forever? asks the elder statesman of the Angles. There does not seem to be much of a choice to Ninny, and it is only after the Angles have thrown all their possessions into the sacred pool to appease the god of the flood that he realizes that he, as temporary king, is also about to be ditched. The nick of time he slips up on, and he is only able to escape by taking to the water. He conducts a parley from his useful vantage point and manages to provoke the fury of both sides.

Everything Ninny does wrong—and he does everything wrong—turns out mysteriously to be right in the end. After surviving the sacrifice, he is adopted as a sort of mascot by big Offa, the king's son; and he finds himself a job, helping Smith and Wright to build a mighty boat to take a party home from the floods that have covered Angles.

During a storm Ninny manages to steer the huge boat over the edge of the world as he thinks. In fact the Angles are at their destination—beached on a sandbar tall flaxen folk of the Angles and the Angles call the Isles of Ocean and the despicable reader will soon recognize to be Britain. Ninny has never known what is going on; he is constantly making a fool of himself; and he is irresistible.

sometimes lose "psychic chunks", are so scantily drawn as to evade the imagination. However assiduously we follow up clues and try to interpret allegories (even with recourse to *The New Testament*, Tolkien, or *Psychic News*), without a picture of the children, only Justice and her brothers, or towards the end of *Phantasia* itself, we risk bewilderment and boredom. This is a great pity for if the two books had been combined the *Dustland* episode would have been absorbed into an intriguing whole.

In the earlier book we gradually become aware of the extra-sensory powers of a family of three class children, lower middle Dorien. The unlikely inclusion of ESP, which is skillfully inserted into the main narrative, is acceptable to the sceptic and enhances rather than detracts from a delicate and adventurous story of sibling rivalry. It is easy to believe in the telepathic "identicals" (twine Thomas and Levi), and Dorien who has healing powers and whose slovenly, downy South mother, "the Sensitive" shows how to come to terms with her. Parental attention of perception. Their children's abnormal powers and adolescent quarrels, with the

## Last things

By Jennifer Moody

JOHN BRANFIELD:  
The Fox in Winter  
Gollancz. £4.95.  
0 575 02860 2JOSEPHINE POOLE:  
Mannah Chance  
Hutchinson. £4.50.  
0 09 141190 4

The majority of the patients of Nancy, Stenack's District Nurse, are elderly, Nancy's daughter Fran is a slightly resentful teenager. Among Nancy's patients are Lucie and Tom Trelaw. Tom is ninety years old, a farmer and former (in miner). Again John Branfield has drawn his inspiration from the scenery and people of Cornwall, and again they have not failed him. For he has portrayed, in a mature and sensitive manner, the blossoming of an affectionate and respectful friendship between Fran and the ancient Tom. Starting as a reluctant duty, Fran begins to tap his rich store of memories, and in the end herself becomes absorbed in the fascination of what he has to say and the dignity of his personality.

Every character in this book is rounded and believable. Nancy is brisk, efficient, humorous, critical of all her colleagues and some of her patients, and deeply humane. Desmond and Vera Rowe, Mr Trelaw's grandson and his wife, fit fully into the life of waiting so long for the reward of inheritance. Above all stands Mr Trelaw, proud, cunning, independent, cheerful, determined to stay alive until all his memories are recorded. For this is the unspoken adventure of the book: the race to bring forth into the mainstream of accessible history Mr Trelaw's lifetime of personal experience. When this is done, his own eventual death seems a gentle rounding off of a life well lived.

The backdrop to the book is the illness and death of the old, but in no way does this create a sense of dread or depression. The author has proved triumphantly that the twentieth century's "great untouchable" can be spoken of in front of the children, and to their great advantage. He treads with great

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D. J. Enright

## Development

*The House of God is due to be converted. These days He has no need of an much space. The children all grown up and moved away. A family scattered, sad but commonplace.*

*Bawling or house-poise? No theatre Or other devil's playground, heaven farland! A last stroll round the old backyard, and then He leaves to room with some old Reverend.*

D. J. Enright

## Hero with a difference

By Alan Jenkins

HELEN YOUNG:  
What Difference Does It Make,  
Daddy?  
Illustrated by Quentin Blake  
Deutsch. £3.25.  
0 233 97248 X

Danny Blane has everything going for him—he is a bright, well-adjusted, likeable child who shines at games (especially swimming), popular with teachers and classmates alike; and he has epilepsy. This is how he puts it: he is not "an epileptic", he "has epilepsy". A modern moral tale which makes a plea for the freeing of epilepsy from the prejudice and ignorance which surrounds it: "more myth and superstition" here than with any other condition, according to Danny's doctor, Helen Young's *What Difference Does It Make, Daddy?* tells the story of a crucial episode in the boy's life as his parents, teachers and fellow schoolchildren are taught to come to terms with and accept the condition in a very matter of fact way.

"Anyone can have a fit; just think how often we say, 'I nearly had a fit'", remarks the enlightening headmistress. Danny's first fit at school is watched with interest by the children and with alarmed but capable solicitude by his teacher. "You looked like a disco dancer who has gone over the top", a friend comments. This attitude of offhandedness mingled with intelligent concern is shared by Danny's parents, everyone, it seems, who matters. His convulsions and deathly stillness are managed com-

pactly, if nervously, by the sensible Miss Pringle: "Now we are finally seeing a fit... and we are going to let Danny get on with it."

The idyllic occasion of school sports day is marked by Danny's winning the swimming races and doing pretty well in the running ones too; his taking naturally and skilfully to the new equipment introduced by a young games master into gym lessons seems to promise great things in the way of enjoyment and acclaim. Sadly, the teacher who recognizes his talent is also the only unenlightened adult in sight. Finding out about Danny's epilepsy, the masterful Mr Masterston immediately bans him from all sport involving the slightest degree of risk—which for a spirited boy like Danny is the only kind worth doing. Worst of all, the ban is extended to swimming. Overnight, Danny the Hero, Mr Masterston's son (though he is not really as smart as all that; he can see Danny appears to be fine, but worries about his reaction in a competitive crisis).

Danny's reaction to this crisis is sadly predictable: hurt and confused, he retaliates with insolence and rage towards the teachers he now sees as his betrayers and with surly, "moods" and irritability towards schoolmates and parents, losing popularity, sympathy and support in the process. Shunned by all, he becomes miserable and withdrawn, and is thrown back on the defences of the "if I'm going to be punished I'll do something to be punished for" kind. Unable to turn to his infinitely well-meaning parents for fear of destroying their confidence in his normality, he takes to naughtiness, to stealing, to swimming cup (which he considers is rightfully his) from the head's

office and, finally, playing truant. Throughout all this Danny never actually seems to grow less lovable; we know it's just a Cry for Help.

It is not long before Danny hears a real cry for help, when a toddler tumbles off the canal-bank and into the canal. Danny to the rescue: scenes of joy and relief, congratulation, forgiveness, reconciliation; exit Danny the Difficult, enter Danny the Hero. Mr Masterston is unmanned (beautifully, he has broken a leg sprinting along by a swimming-pool—something he tells the children never to do) but man enough to admit the error of his ways. Danny has given him just about the best crisis-reaction scenario he could have, and from now on no one is going to stand in Danny's way by throwing the word "epileptic" at him. He always has been able to cope with epilepsy; the grown-ups are the ones who need help.

It is all just about believable; though the characters are like the cardboard people on the back of cornflakes packets, and everyone seems a bit too nice to be true, the school scenes have an authentic (if a shade too sophisticated) air. Helen Young writes crisply, but the cannot prevent an occasional schoolmistressy note creeping in. However, she never talks down to her readers, and this book, generously illustrated with appealing sketches by Quentin Blake, will strike a chord in most children who have felt the sting of injustice—which means all children; and a deep chord in any who have felt that they were being singled out for unwelcome attention. For children who have epilepsy and their parents, it should be an instructive, heartwarming read.

## Literally speaking

The one way to revive a metaphor once it has died is to take it literally, which is what Shirley Hughes has done to some fifty or more exanimate English sayings in *Over the Moon* (Puffin, £3.25, 0 571 11594 2). She has picked her clichés shrewdly, and made them into amusing pictures. It is comical to watch language being brought down to earth: to see someone actually casting pearls before swine, or keeping their nose to the grindstone, or being born with a silver spoon in their mouth. The style of the drawings is early-Punch, strongly naturalistic everywhere except for the human faces, which are furiously expressive. On Shirley Hughes's first page to mine worryingly lifelike cat and dog on to two cowering pedestrians; overleaf a revoltingly meek young man is visibly tied to his showy mother's apron-strings. There is an edge of unpleasantness to these two drawings that will please any child, and which too many of the remaining pages lack. But this is a simple and engaging book that might prompt its readers to have fun of their own visualizing the merely verbal.

J.S.

## Round and round

*I have an ancient hike,  
So life is never dull.  
Its handlebars are cowhorns;  
Its saddle like a skull.*

*Its handlebars are cowhorns;  
My steering leads to muddles.  
I wish I had a Raleigh  
To get me through the puddles.*

*I wish I had a Raleigh  
Or one of the proper makes,  
Not this old rusty spinner  
With antiquated brakes.*

*Not this old rusty spinner  
Which always makes me late;  
I rise upon each pedal  
With one leg very straight.*

*I rise upon each pedal  
And press the other down.  
That's how the wheels go round  
And round and round and round.*

John Fuller

## Tunnels and trains

By Judith Elkin

LAWRENCE LEONARD:  
The Horn of Mortal Danger  
Julia MacRae Books. £4.95  
0 86203 010 2HARRIET GRAHAM:  
The Ring of Zoraya  
Hamish Hamilton. £4.95.  
0 241 10475 0

*The Horn of Mortal Danger* is Lawrence Leonard's first book. He begins rather slowly but once under way, this is a lively, original and exciting adventure story set against an entirely credible yet fantastic background.

The two main characters, Jen and her brother Widge find a strange passage below a disused railway and discover that beneath the streets of London there is a fascinating secret world of small-scale canals and railways inhabited by rather old-fashioned, child-sized men. But this is not a whimsical world: it is a savage world of working men struggling to survive in a harsh environment. The clothes, names and language may be quaint but these are hard, fighting men.

Jen and Widge immediately find themselves involved in a deadly struggle for territory between the two rival groups, the Railwaymen and the Canallers. The early skirmishes the great Battle for Beasley's Arches, and subsequently, the joint initiative against the mining rats, are vividly and realistically described. The children escape through the confusing network of canals and railways, closely pursued by the undergrounders. The suspense and pace of the story is well maintained throughout and the children's eventual arrival above ground provides a humorous climax.

## Believe it or not

By Oliver Liss

*Funny Facts About the Tiger*  
0 237 45521 4  
*Funny Facts About the Giraffe*  
0 237 45510 4  
*Funny Facts About the Crocodile*  
0 237 45511 2  
*Funny Facts About the Wolf*  
0 237 45524 2  
Bvans. £2.95 each.

The funny fact about the series of *Funny Facts* books is that it is the pictures rather than the facts which are funny. The facts are few in number, a mere ten per book, euphoric in their succinctness, random examples of, rather than poignant episodes in, the lives of these beasts of the field and river: "The wolf, when fully grown spends almost the whole year alone"; "The giraffe very rarely lies down to rest, but stays standing up until it is time to sleep"; "The crocodile moves slowly on land, although it can travel at great speed in the

The imaginative detail with which the underground world is described and the very individual portraits of many of the characters result in a fascinatingly credible story. But I felt that it was a pity that some of the impetus was lost at the end by the author's use of an epilogue to finish off the loose ends and provide more detail of life underground. If such information could not be incorporated in the main story, it would appear to be rather superfluous and unnecessary for the reader's understanding and enjoyment.

*The Ring of Zoraya* provides an equally fantastic story but this time within the context of a historical novel. It is set in the year 1894 at the time of the death of Emperor Alexander III, Tsar of all the Russias. William, Flora and their guardian, Samuel are on their way from the city of St. Petersburg, where Flora is to train with a great Russian ballet master. Travelling on the Orient Express, their peace is disturbed by the rather ungracious arrival of Crown Prince Michael of Sviadnia. This somewhat contrived event leads to their involvement in Crown Prince Michael's affairs and a plot to overthrow the King of Sviadnia, under cover of the confusion of the Tsar's funeral.

There follows a thrilling sequence of deceit, kidnaps, disappearances, and a marvellous collection of scenes considerably by the fact that Samuel is a skilful conjurer and ventriloquist. An early morning chase through the Russian countryside in a carriage and pair, pursued by big-baddies, culminates in the final climax when William saves the King from the assassination attempt. The story is written in a lively, chatty style, narrated by the boy and capturing his tension and confusions in the face of treachery. The pace is fast-moving and will appeal to children who like a cloak-and-dagger approach to historical adventure stories.

water: "The tiger lives in Asia, mainly in lands."

The pictures, delightfully executed by Nolla Bosniak, sure of line, subtle in colouring, use these facts as an excuse to take these wild animals out of their natural habitat and place them in a world of make-believe in which they indulge in very human practices. Thus, the wolf, spending his year alone sits in an armchair (admittedly on top of a mountain) reading a book beneath an umbrella; the giraffe, who very rarely lies down to rest, stands looking out of the window of the Orient Express, while the sleeping-car attendant yawns; the crocodile is shown travelling at great speed in the water on water skis and the tiger who lives mainly in India is reclining on cushions, a turban on his head, his glassy green eyes concentrating on the mouthpiece of the hookah which he draws on with tigerish attention.

Children will, visually, be greatly entertained by these books, though they might get some funny ideas about the habits of the animals from the pictures. The facts, alas, might just go in one eye and out the other.

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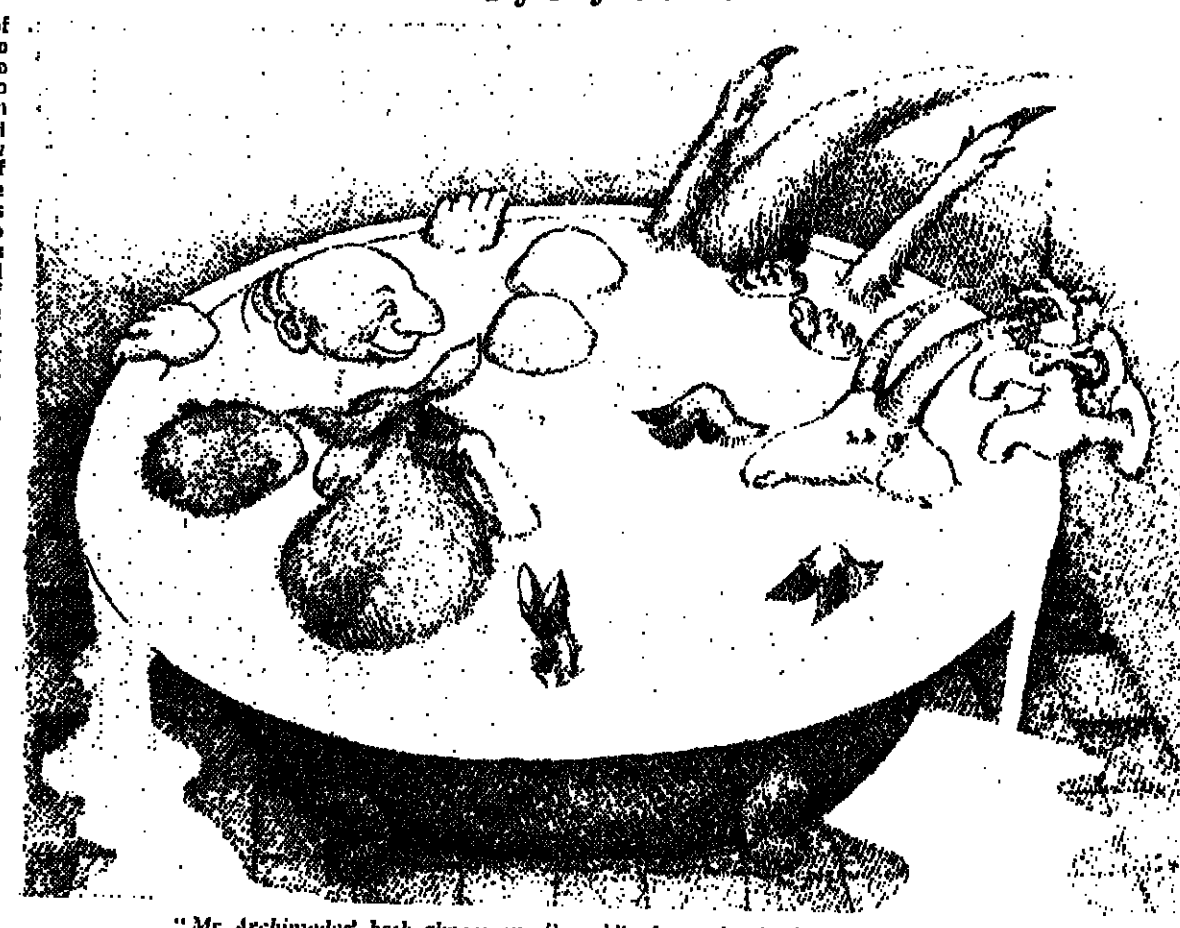
## Attracting the reader

By Joy Chant

Children have such a wide choice of picture books and so short a time to select them, that the problem is to choose those that are too good to miss. The standard has been so high for so long that no child need spend time on the mediocre, and new titles must have some solid merit if they are to compete with those already available. Newness alone is no recommendation to children, to whom everything is new. The books in this batch for children old enough to want a story but not of an age to have outgrown the picture book format, have all been produced with care and skill; but most of them lack the vigour and brightness necessary to attract and satisfy the young reader. The most complete failure is *The Prince and the Little*; good design, colourful pictures, but the story falls flat. It strives to make a moral point, but this is somewhat obscure; the persevering prince saves only himself from war, not his people. The last of the title appears, awkwardly, at the last minute, to bring people the happiness that safety and prosperity have not. Even the priggish hero does not find the idea convincing.

Several of these books have the disadvantage of being imports, with that faint strangeness which seems to deter children more than the exotic. *The Useless Donkeys* has a general flavour of smiling vagrancy, unexpected in an Australian book. *Snow-Cat* has a stranger ambience, for example North American animals and vocabulary, and the added problem of illustrations which though lovely are in muted shades of brown and blue; but it has a charm that may outweigh these drawbacks. The writing has an easy swing, and the book, lifted by the personality of Henry the sking Siamese, affectionate, self-absorbed, and utterly feline. Arnold Lobel's *Fables*, in itself excellent, is likely to be best enjoyed by any adult who laughs at the jokes in *The New Yorker*, but their humour is too down-beat for children. The morals whether straightforward or tongue-in-cheek, will puzzle rather than edify or entertain. And what is a spit-ball?

*The Lonely Skyscraper* is surrounded by roads and is nobody's home, so he uproots himself and finds a new site in a forest, where he becomes home to herds of small animals and thus is warm and happy. A good traditional theme, but perhaps skyscrapers are too hard to love; certainly I found the



"Mr Archimedes' bath always overflowed"—from the book reviewed opposite.

whole idea rather too strained. The illustrations are cheerful and unimpressive, with one serious fault: the scale of the skyscraper alters when convenient, so that the building which dwarfed people to invisibility can later be intimidated by a farmer and converse with a bird. Also the first opening is poorly designed; the first picture is on the right-hand page, the story begins on the left, and I missed the text every time.

Two very English books turn their eyes to the past. *Charming Farm 1860* is the solo production of an illustrator, and reads like it. The pictures are warm and solid, but the text, ill-organized and dull, does not adequately support them. *Cathy's Story* is also a one-woman show, but a greater if incomplete

success. It is a praiseworthy attempt to deal with the subject of death. Friendship with an old lady brings Cathy into contact with a harsher experience of life. Mrs Singer recounts tales of her own past describing a world where measles could be fatal and little girls attended their young brothers' funerals, yet happiness was still possible. The long-dead people in Mrs Singer's collection of photographs live far her, and at the end of the story Cathy is able to accept the pictures are unlikely to attract young children, and the text is too brief for its task; this might have been better done as an ordinary book.

Not What You Think contains two stories, the story of Oliver who

is afraid of the old green engine, and the story told him by his mother, of Oliver the baby elephant. This second Oliver credulously accepts all he hears about "the ancient elephant who hates children: until experience teaches him that you do not have to believe all you hear in the playground. It is delightfully done, with fine balance between pictures and text, and the little locomotive elephants are irresistible. I could have done without the other story, told in a matter-of-factly and out which makes the lesson more explicit, but it is not a serious drawback. This is one it would be a pity to miss.

The best last, *Willie's Fire Engine*. Charles Keeping is the artist of the inner city, teaching us to see its shapes and patterns, the beauty

that lies beside its squalor. Probably the city in winter; for as no-one else can see the bright shop-fronts reflected in the windows, the gleam of rain on the grey cobbles. Most of all he teaches us how in childhood that dream of blithely of magic and adventure. The subject of this time is Edinburgh, Willie, a boy with a dream of being the planor of Willie's dream. The planor in Keeping's vision of the city; on the first page the scene is ranked, heavy straight lines and dull colours, but above them rise the fiery golden haze of the Castle, and opposite, Willie sits outside the solid grey tenement, down the hill the pressor is almost of a scribble with a swift liquid line, looking little more than a sketch against the weight of his background, but rising with life. These are Keeping's three visual themes; the same heavy lines, the fluid lines of the live creatures, the lambent color of Willie's imaginary heroes are the men of the horse-drawn engine.

When Willie goes on his quest, struck, braving the dangers of the streets, evading past locked gates a beautiful night, he comes to a stronghold ruled by a giant and place where life and dreams and heavy lines dissolve into life, as pages are suffused with fiery color and out of the darkness of the city Willie's dream flows in scarlet and gold. Splendid, cathartic, enriching; or in other words, Charles Keeping's *Willie's Fire Engine*. Illustrated by Charles Keeping. Victor Gollancz, £5.00 575 02839 4

LYNDA PENDER: *The Useless Donkeys*. Illustrated by Judith C. McElroy. £3.95. 0 416 68601 1

MARY CALHOUN: *Snow-Cat*. Illustrated by Erick Ingraham. Yearling. £3.50. 0 575 03861 2

ARNOLD LOBEL: *Fables*. Jonathan Cape. £3.95. 0 24 01855 3

JERRY HAWKSWORTH: *The Lonely Skyscraper*. Illustrated by Emanuel Schlegel. Doves. £3.25. 0 416 84180 2

CONVY PATTERSON: *Charming Farm 1860*. Andrew Dunn. £3.00 213 97208 0

CAMILLER BUCKINGHAM: *Cathy's Story*. Evans. £3.50. 0 247 4809 1

MINA LAM: *Not What You Think*. Illustrated by Sue Wigel. Durr. £1.95. 0 400 06999 3

ELLEN S. KATZ: *Willie's Fire Engine*. Oxford University Press. £3.95. 0 19 274724 X

Parents are often teased (usually by people with children) for buying the books they like, rather than consulting their child. The implication is that children would much prefer more lowbrow stuff. There is some sort of justice in the charge, though I would want to argue the child's point of view slightly differently. But a wise child will try to please the parent. How can we read aloud a book that bores or repels us without conveying the fact? There is no point in being apologetic about it. A story that is irritating to read the first time round is liable to lead to childbattering on the thirtieth. Furthermore, I know that I am not the only parent who has actually fallen asleep while reading aloud. Having a story together is a particularly delightful way of sharing jokes, ideas, perceptions with a small child; they like it much better if your teeth are not gritting or your lids are not drooping.

The only way we can judge children's books is in terms of whether or not we would like to share it with particular children. With that in mind, we could pass the complaint on to the publishers: that they are the ones who often select books on the basis of artwork which gives them some kind of aesthetic or sentimental thrill which they therefore assume will please the under-fives. The import of Japanese picture books is a hazardous business in this respect.

The two in this collection, *Rain* and *The Day I Got Better*, have some of the pictures, particularly in the second, are exquisite. Peggy Blakeley is masterly at writing simple, vibrant words for this age, and the two should go together well. But the result is emptiness compounded.

Possibly much older children would have seen the pictures as the publishers intended: the idea of the appropriate age is an elusive one. A book that leaves a three-year-old unmoved may intrigue her when she is ten. The book that my eight-year-old liked best in this group was John Mair's *But and Be Enon*, a picture book without words there is a picture of the ferocious head of one animal about to bite the tail of another kind of animal.

Turn over, and the head to sink tail belongs is about to sink its teeth into another kind of tail. Then look again at the cover: the

tell on the back endpapers goes right round to the front cover and the savage circle is completed. I wouldn't have chosen this for a little child, not because of the savagery but because I found the pictures rather harsh. But my older child (continuously) loved the idea. He has also recently grown into another of these books: a few years ago I tried to interest him in *Animal Lore and Disorder*, a book that I had loved as a child. He was upset by it. He only wanted to see correct animals, and would flip frantically through the split pages to match lion top with lion legs. Now, however, the latest book of this kind by James Riddell *Up and Down on the Farm*, leaves him helpless with laughter. For those who do not yet know these books, I should explain that each pair of pages is devoted to an animal. On one of the pages is a sentence about the beast, on the other a picture, and its name written vertically beside it. The *Fire Stealer*, an Indian legend from northern Ontario, has marvelous collage illustrations by Elizabeth Cleaver.

A pair of artists with a wonderfully fresh touch, whose pictures one would be happy to share with any child is Jose Aruego and Ariane Dewey. Their collaboration on *Maria Louise's Heyday* has produced some lovely creatures, in theory possums and mongoose, with very appealing expressions and gestures. Maria Louise is in despair when asked to babysit for five small possums ("And on my Heyday"). They turn out to be terrible but she fixes them. "I'm glad I'm me and not you," said Maria Louise to me, possum, and she left. A sentiment shared by many baby-sitters of other species, but gently put by this patient mongoose.

*The Grannies Three* by Mary Tozer is a good idea: she has a fine perception of the different kinds of grannies, an area of experience which most under-fives are well acquainted with, but which has been little explored by authors. The pictures are rich, bright and Tarrant-like, elaborated with borders woven from the subject. The grannies have a brush with a dragon

and four bears, but it goes on just a little too long, and did not have an excellent addition, for example, to a school library. *Ox-Cart Man* which won the Caldecott medal, annoyed me. It describes a year in the life of a New Englander and his family. The pictures are in the style of American Primitive paintings, and the text is a simple statement of the things that the family made and sold in the market. Again, this should be delightful; Laura Ingalls Wilder can charm us

## Pre-school pictures

By Ruth Hawthorn

It would read aloud well, but to a little child, and it would be an excellent addition, for example, to a school library. *Ox-Cart Man* which won the Caldecott medal, annoyed me. It describes a year in the life of a New Englander and his family. The pictures are in the style of American Primitive paintings, and the text is a simple statement of the things that the family made and sold in the market. Again, this should be delightful; Laura Ingalls Wilder can charm us

with details like this of pioneer survival. But this book has the details without any of her spirit. There is fine opportunity to be witty or wry or in any other way human in books like this; we have always enjoyed *Grandfather Den* by Eva Scheraga for all these qualities. But this book just takes the whole thing too seriously. One can't help feeling that the medal was awarded by one lot of solemn adults to another as a celebration of some empty myth.

PEGGY BLAKELEY: *Rain*. Paintings by Kate Taniuchi. Adam and Charles Black. £3.50. 0 7136 2017 X

PEGGY BLAKELEY: *The Day I Got Better*. Paintings by Chiro Iwasaki. Adam and Charles Black. £3.50. 0 7136 2018 8

IRLA MAIR: *But and Be Enon*. J. M. Dent and Sons. £3.50. 0 460 06054 8

JAMES RIDDLE: *Up and Down on the Farm*. Arlun Press Ltd with Jonathan Cape. £2.95. 0 22401709 8

NATALIE SAVAGE CARLSON: *Maria Louise's Heyday*. Pictures by Jose Aruego and Ariane Dewey. Julia MacRae Books. £3.75. 0 86203 065 X

MARY TOZER: *The Grannies Three*. World's Work. £3.50. 437 79421 6

PANELLA ARLAN: *Mr Archimedes' Bath*. Bodley Head. £3.50. 0 370 90258 3

WILLIAM TOVE: *The Fire Stealer*. Pictures by Elizabeth Cleaver. Oxford University Press. £2.95. 19 5403215

DONALD HALL: *Ox-Cart Man*. Pictures by Barbara Conney. Julia MacRae Books. £3.95. 0 86203 076 5

## In among the hedgerows

By Celina Fox

JILL BARKLEM:

*Brambly Hedge*:

Summer Story 0 00 183923 3

Spring Story 0 00 183922 5

Winter Story 0 00 183711 7

Autumn Story 0 00 183739 7

Collins. £2.50 each.

The *Brambly Hedge* books are a carefully produced series of picture books about the life of a tiny community of mice and voles in a hedge. The illustrations are beautiful, detailed flower drawings appropriate to each season which decorate the outdoor scenes: violets, primroses, apple blossom and blue bells for spring, honey-suckle, kingcups and buttercups, wild roses and forget-me-nots in high summer, hawthorn and crab apples, hips and blackberries for autumn. To any child close enough to the hedgerows to be able to spot the real thing, these books can provide good lessons in natural history.

The characterization of the mice is simple and not troubled by any real problems. There is a pleasing realism, *Willfred's* naughtiness with acorn missiles, *Primrose* Woodmouse, the subject of the *Autumn* Story only has time to worry fleetingly when she is lost about the woods before being found by loving parents and neighbours. It is a nostalgic picture of a rural idyll. The old order is preserved with Lord Woodmouse in his ancestral home (though it is a relief

to note he is not above taking mist to the cook and that his wife Daisy is distinctly homogenous, being the daughter of homely Mr and Mrs Apple). Old Oak Paluco itself is an intricate warren of staircases in an oak tree, leading to high ceilinged bedrooms with four-posters. Yet it is still sufficiently contrived to have stencilled borders on the walls; bunches of dried flowers suspended from the beams and a suspicion of Laura Ashley in the closet. In the kitchen the food has a pleasingly simple chic: these mice seem to enjoy French cheese; Provencal crockery adorns the Welsh dresser.

The encroaching autumn and winter prevents the illustrations from becoming too coated in saggy pastels. The darkness of the night among the brambles and road-trees and the slightly haunting shadows as the mice search for Primrose introduce a darker note. The wide sweep of the snow-covered fields in the *Winter* Story, contrasting with the warm firesides, must and soup inside are very appealing. The series is a good recommendation but is a nostalgic picture of a rural idyll. The old order is preserved with Lord Woodmouse in his ancestral home (though it is a relief

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£3.95





# One shilling plain, eighteen-pence coloured

By Iona and Peter Opie

Taken from the introduction to *A Nursery Companion* edited by Iona and Peter Opie which will be published by Oxford University Press on September 25 (£8.95, 0 19 21223 4).

Children have been forgiven for being children ever since adults discovered the fun of sharing a joke with them; and the person who, more than any other, brought about this amnesty was a young woman, Sarah Catherine Martin, who herself never had children, who indeed never married (she had already turned down a future king of England), and who does not even seem to have been thinking about children at the time. The score and more booklets which form *A Nursery Companion* were the result of an innovation she made in children's literature, which to this day is not fully appreciated, let alone celebrated annually as it should be with a public holiday.

On July 1, 1805, a middle-aged publisher, John Harris, who had acquired control of the leading children's book publishing house, but had not up to this time shown great entrepreneurial ability, issued a small squarish booklet of sixteen leaves, 5x4 inches, described on the cover simply as *The Comic Adventures of Old Mother Hubbard*, and *Her Dog*. Illustrated with fifteen black and white engravings on copper-plate. The story of a now-familiar maternal tale of an old woman whose cupboard was bare; and each verse was paired with a graphic but not very accomplished engraving.

The probability is that Harris himself did not know who had conceived this booklet. At the beginning of the nineteenth century moralists and educators customarily had their names on the title-pages of their works; but those who sought to entertain the public remained discreet about it. They were not held to be advancing man's spiritual and intellectual welfare like their self-bound contemporaries, and could not therefore expect to be admired. In only one of the folios we chose, for instance, was the full name given of its author; and more than a century was to pass before the identity was revealed as "S.C.M." or "S.M.C." the initials variously appearing in early editions of *Old Mother Hubbard*.

This anonymity was not however to prove a disadvantage. The booklet, which was priced at a shilling a copy and unlike anything that had been produced before for the young—if indeed it was intended for the young—was an instant success. Harris said that within a few months he had sold 10,000 copies. By the following year twenty editions had been printed. People in all walks of life and throughout the world began ordering copies. And when the poet John Keats (Peter Pinchard) wrote on the score page referring not to the juvenile but to the adult.

This, of course, is the poem which appeared in the booklet which



The History of an Apple Pie Written by Z, from the book discussed on this page.

identified it as being for the young other than that it could be obtained in London "at the Original Juvenile Library, the Corner of St Paul's Church-yard", where, as was well known, books for mature readers were also on sale. In fact the booklet was produced with such style, being engraved throughout and printed on good quality paper, that it was difficult to think it could be intended for the young. Nobody, however, needed to feel embarrassed at being seen with it; and everybody, even the evangelical Mrs Trimmer, thought it amusing. Harris had produced a booklet, inadvertently as it now appears, which an adult could appreciate as well as a child; and although, like any publisher of the present day who has not understood precisely why the book was so successful, he possessed energy and ability, and immediately set about looking for other material that could be issued in the same manner.

Before the year was out he had produced *Whimsical Incidents, or the Power of Music, a Poetic Tale by a new Relation of Old Mother Hubbard*; and thereafter *A Continuation of The Comic Adventures of Old Mother Hubbard*, and *A Sequel to The Comic Adventures of Old Mother Hubbard*. But none of them had the zest of the original. In the spring of 1806, in addition to *The Adventures of Old Mother Hubbard*, he tried *Pug's Visit, or The Disasters of Mr Punch in which for those days*, and followed, felicitously, with *The Rattle, the Ship, Merry Marriage, and A Dinner of Cock Robin and Jenny Wren and The Talking Bird*: or, 1807, however, he hit the jackpot with another curiosity, a 32-line poem entitled *The Butterfly's Ball*, written—it was correctly rumoured—by a historian and mem-

ber of parliament; and soon after he had the good fortune to be offered, as a sequel to *The Butterfly's Ball*, *The Peacock at Home* by Charlotte Smith's younger sister, Mrs Dorset, which proved as successful if not more so. (The texts of both pieces are in *The Oxford Book of Children's Verse*.) He then showed the type of verse required by resuscitating Cowper's *Divining History of John Gilpin* and Goldsmith's *Elegy on Mrs Mary Haize*, both of which had been conceived for adult diversion; and he proved that when such pieces are brought to life pictorially the audience for them, as Goldsmith was to confirm, has no lower age limit. Even if a child lacks the ability to appreciate such nuance in such entertainments, he can enjoy, which is almost as exciting, the reminiscence of his parents' enjoyment of them.

The financial rewards of this meantime, being observed by Harris's competitors. They could almost be heard chanting the lesson: Old dames who are funny enjoy, while is almost as exciting, the reminiscence of his parents' enjoyment of them. The financial rewards of this meantime, being observed by Harris's competitors. They could almost be heard chanting the lesson: Old dames who are funny enjoy, while is almost as exciting, the reminiscence of his parents' enjoyment of them. A comparatively new publisher, Benjamin Tabart, who had an establishment in New Bond Street, was quick off the mark with *The History of a Little Old Woman, who found a Silver Penny* (May 22, 1806), followed by *The Little Maid in 1807*. A branch of the Quaker publishing house of Darton was even more prompt with a fine Harris-type edition of *The Death and Burial of Cock Robin*, dated January 11, 1806 (the plates of the various productions, followed by Bloomfield's tale of a credulous old woman in *The Bakenham Ghost*, April 1, 1806. Didier and Tebbett of St James's

- I Inspected it,
- J Jumped over it,
- K Kicked it,
- L Laughed at it,
- M Mourned for it,
- N Nodded for it,
- O Opened it,
- P Peeped into it,

Street, Pall Mall, published *The Whole Particulars of that Renowned Sportsman Sam and his Gun*, January 1, 1808; and R. Dutton, in association with Harris and Tabart, was publishing the most successful new version, *The Conjuror, or the Turkey and the Ring*.

The most surprising, as also the most unlikely, however, was the handwagon was the philosopher William Godwin. By the end of November 1805, he and his second wife Mary Jane had set up as booksellers and stationers off Oxford Street, and had prepared their first publication on the lines of Harris's *Old Mother Hubbard* entitled *The King and Queen of Hearts*, with the *Rogues of the Kinnor*. Further, as if to ensure that the booklet, however trivial, would achieve a footnote in literary history, he and his friend Godwin had induced to write the verses—probably to accompany engravings already executed—was the thirty-year-old Charles Lamb. Nor was this Godwin's only attempt to emulate Harris. During the next couple of years he and Mary Jane produced a series of little booklets on the same model, culminating in 1808 with *Minstrel Nonsense*; or, *The Discoveries of John Bull in a Trip to Paris*; and although the acception has not previously been made the name of this *Jeu d'esprit* seemed to have been Godwin's own talented ten-year-old daughter, the future Mary Shelley.

Godwin's business did not prosper; Harris's did. Godwin might express the view that the true object of education, like that of any other moral process, is the generation of happiness; yet fail to appreciate that the vital source of people's intellectual development but a curative point of view. From a literary point of view, Godwin's publications were more worthwhile than Harris's. Some of them, such as *Swiss Family Robinson* and the *Lamb's Tales* (landmarks; but Harris's books had, at one and the same time, a feeling of class and of kindness that has been seen in, for instance, the publications of Felix Sumner in the 1840s, and the Puffin Picture Books in the 1940s.

In 1819 Harris, now joined by his son, sensed the way trade was going and boldly up-marketed his nursery books still further. The small squarish booklet that he had been producing, priced at One Shilling plain, and Eighteen-pence coloured, gave little room for verse and illustration on the same page. Despite the skill of his engravers and the 7in x 4in size now usually type-set, could appear together in comfort; and, more importantly, he determined that in his new *Cabinet of Amusement and Instruction* the books should be issued only with their illustrations coloured. The set, with a feature of the copperplates hitherto were largely discarded. The new years 1812-22 the minimum shading, and, very often, almost blank backgrounds. Indeed, pictures of this period which have been found uncoloured

look as flat as a stage-set day for colour television that in black and white. But who work with their water-colours results were wonderful. In the inflationary days the cost of the ink was quite prepared Harris's standard price of 1s 6d each for the "most agreeable Novelties for the Nursery".

Harris commended his new *Comic Adventures of Old Mother Hubbard*, and followed with a choice of such established tales as *The History of the House of the Bull*, *The History of the Pig*, *Cock Robin*, and *A New Archer and Snail* at a Frog. He did not only play safe, but came to appreciate, it seems, much his success was due to humouring the child's gaze; as well as the child, and several in the series were genuine novelties. He issued a book of pure nonsense styled *Peter Piper's Practical Principles of Plain and Perfect Punctuation*. He published the *Book of Himericks*, *The History of Sixteen Wonderful Old Women*, the elegant grammar ever published, *The Path of Learning Street*, *Flowers*, as also the most useful aid in the use of punctuation, *Punctuation Personified*; or *Being Made Easy*. Here again, as he was limited. The last of them and Murray issued a later, more practical grammar and home education (including a immensely popular introduction to learning music; they marked the new *Mother Hubbard* with a tune that charmed the infant, *Eighteen Wonderful Old Women*, *Seven Wonderful Cats*; and he consistently undertook the charging a shilling each for his almost-comparable "coloured books".

Carvalho of *Flowers* Square was another in the line who, under Godwin's hand, a serviceable line of standard text and a shilling each (for example, *Jack and Jill* and *Juvenile History*), and Carvalho is particularly notable in having anticipated the popular volume by bringing together eleven of his picture booklets into a handsome volume of 150 illustrations which he entitled *The Infant's Book*.

Most of all, John Marshall, who shop in Fleet Street was set up from Harris's in St Paul's Church-yard, was a direct competitor. His publications can only be described as such, his style as rough, his serviceable line of standard text and a shilling each (for example, *Jack and Jill* and *Juvenile History*), and Carvalho is particularly notable in having anticipated the popular volume by bringing together eleven of his picture booklets into a handsome volume of 150 illustrations which he entitled *The Infant's Book*.

Portraying people as animals is a stock device in children's picture books, although it is sometimes criticized by the serious-minded for its irrelevance. In most cases the animals retain some of their characteristics, or are contrasted against real human beings. More rarely, the animals are humanized in every detail; they could be exchanged for ordinary people without alteration to the text. This is the case with two new picture books, *Arthur's New Power* and *Goodbye, Arnold!*, although both these books would lose something if read with humans.

of the nineteenth century have an alertness and grace not achieved in any other period. The reader has the feeling from them, as is some times portrayed with them, of a period in which cultured parents possessed the inclination as well as the leisure to walk hand in hand with their children, and together look at the world around them in wonder. But the tempo of the times was soon to change. The belief in progress, and the possible perfection of man, was once again to take hold of men's minds; and, as always happens in periods of moral advancement, lightheartedness was to be frowned upon. Before George IV's ten-year-reign was over the quality of the nursery colour-books had declined. Indeed the market for them had contracted. Their novelty had worn off. Cheap imitations were mass-produced by less fastidious publishers; and child-workers were employed to draw on paint where formerly skilled colourists had made a livelihood. By 1832 and the nonsense days of the Reform Bill, the inhabitants of the nursery were once again being looked upon as little pudding-bags to be stuffed with knowledge. The wonder is, perhaps, that people had ever thought otherwise; and the suspicion cannot be avoided that, in part, nonsense had been allowed entry to top nurseries through a misapprehension.

In 1805 nursery rhymes were not widely known and beloved as they are today; and when *The Comic Adventures of Old Mother Hubbard* was published many people imagined the tale was an original composition. It so happened that the amateur who, as we now know, supplied the sketches for the verses, was well connected. Sarah Catherine Martin was the eldest daughter of Sir Henry Martin Bt,

Comptroller of the Navy; and naturally her family moved in circles that included other people active in public life. In fact, when her father was naval commander at Portsmouth, Prince William Henry (afterwards William IV), who was stationed at Portsmouth in 1785-86, had been a frequent visitor at his house, had fallen in love with Sarah, and offered her not only his heart but what was scarcely his in offer, his hand in marriage. Sarah, then aged seventeen, had apparently understood the impossibility of the situation. Instead of attempting a secret liaison, she informed her family. She was promptly sent away; and, although William continued for a while to affirm his attachment, it is a matter of history that in time he found himself able to bestow his affections elsewhere. Sarah's feelings on the other hand, are unrecorded. It is known only that despite her evident attractiveness she never married; and that when in 1804 she and her sister Judith were staying at Kitley in Devon, the home of John Pollexton Bastard MP, her romantic days seem to have been over; the sister the MP was courted by Judith. The legend in the Bastard family was that Sarah, an incessant talker, used to exasperate her host, and to obtain occasional respite he encouraged her to find some way of entertaining herself on her own. *The Comic Adventures of Old Mother Hubbard*, illustrated with her sketches (the manuscript still exists), was the result.

In every age, it seems, there are people who are incapable of understanding that nonsense is no sense in disguise. When confronted with a composition of no obvious meaning they instantly suspect a hidden meaning; and *Alice in Wonderland* is found to be a veiled account of religious controversy, Winnie the Pooh becomes a phallic symbol, and

the story of the Huhbit is considered allegorical. Before Sarah's booklet was submitted to John Harris for publication she thought fit to insert a dedication:

To ——— Esq. M.P.  
County of ——— at whose suggestion and at whose House these notable sketches were designed this Volume is with all suitable deference Dedicated by his Humble Servt  
S.C.M.

This dedication had exactly the ingredients necessary to turn a little playbook into a society bestseller, and, in so doing, make a new kind of literature fashionable in the home. It not only named, cryptically, a member of parliament, it acknowledged him to be the instigator of the pretended nonsense. Who could doubt, on this evidence, that so unusual a publication, in fact a lampoon on some political figure?

Indeed we are left with only one question. When the voracious nursery literature a hundred and sixty years ago is served, how is it that educationalists and others have kept talking about the dreariness of books for the young in the past? The answer must be that the critics have been aware only of the dreary books, and that is of course understandable. The books that commonly survive from the past are either those that were expensive at the time or were unreadable. The books that gave immediate delight, and are passed on delightedly from one reader to another, are seldom the ones that are set aside for posterity. Some of the best books are now so scarce they are not to be found even in the largest libraries; and we must admit to having been assembling them for this volume for more than thirty years.

© Iona and Peter Opie 1980.

## Well-heeled crocodiles

By Kicki Moxon Browne

RUSSELL HOBAN:  
*Arthur's New Power*  
Illustrated by Byron Burton  
Gallance, £3.50.  
0 375 02835 1

F. K. ROCHE:  
*Goodbye, Arnold!*  
Hamish Hamilton, £3.95.  
0 241 19455 6

Portraying people as animals is a stock device in children's picture books, although it is sometimes criticized by the serious-minded for its irrelevance. In most cases the animals retain some of their characteristics, or are contrasted against real human beings. More rarely, the animals are humanized in every detail; they could be exchanged for ordinary people without alteration to the text. This is the case with two new picture books, *Arthur's New Power* and *Goodbye, Arnold!*, although both these books would lose something if read with humans.

anyone but an older child—or an adult—can appreciate. *Goodbye, Arnold!* is more obviously aimed at children of picture-book age, and deals with the love-hate relationship between two young brothers, Arnold and Webster, who are portrayed as mice. Webster feels that his older brother is hogging all the good things, and passionately wishes him out of the way. When his brother does go off to stay with his grandmother, Webster ecstatically invades his territory; he throws himself on all the toys he was not allowed to touch, and leaps into the top bunk he was not allowed to sleep in. However, as the novelty wears off he misses the noisy games and the companion ship.

Again there is something comically absurd about two mice having names like Arnold and Webster, and behaving so much as brothers do. But the real bonus of using mice rather than little boys is that the stereotypes can help to put across the universal but painful subject of sibling rivalry gently and in abstract. The low-key, affectionate text and the uncluttered illustrations, which on closer examination show themselves full of intriguing details, make it a likeable book, well worth coming back to time after time.

## Inheritors

The snow is at the same time as the owl;  
When it drops down to the sill, the wings close.

First question: Why should the owl  
Fly down each night to peer at our painted room?

Softly the snow-dots tumble from its back  
As it stands on still claws and looks in,

Second question: Why does the owl  
Stare in so long at our wine and velvet chairs?

Away from its nest, old feathers, suspicious gaze,  
Away if you walk near the window, but always back,

Third question: If one of us has summoned it,  
Which?

—And so we sit, four men in a shared house,  
In a particularly scarlet room.  
Not easy as we snow down cards, four  
After four on the shining table-top;

Not easy as our fingers claw them in;

Wondering what is meant by these visits  
From two old interested eyes, not easy  
Wondering also which of us might know,

Alan Brownjohn



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Allan Rune Pettersson

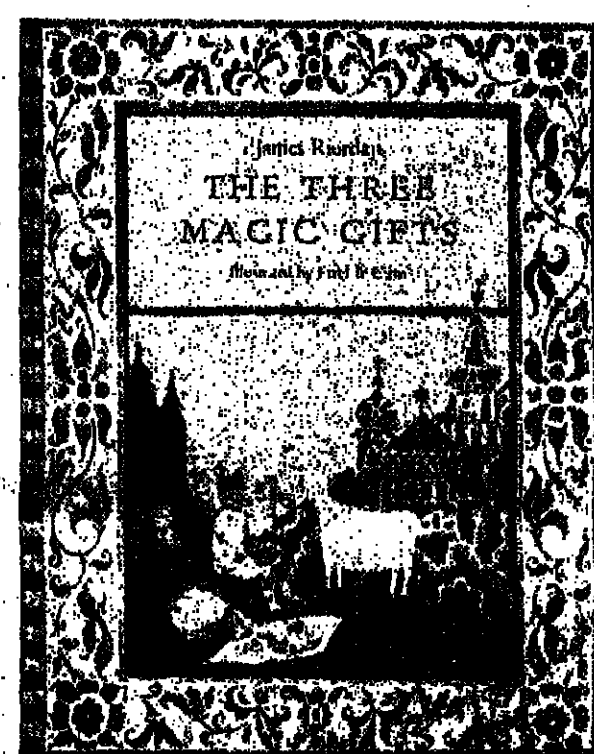
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## Looking it up

By Mary Warnock

Everyone knows that there are children of eight or nine with an adult reading age, and the inquisitive insatiable of an old-style professor. Other children of fourteen can hardly read, and regard books as an enemy and a threat. How can an encyclopedia cater for all of these? And what, in any case, is an encyclopedia supposed to be for?

Looking at a collection of new, or fairly recent, children's encyclopedias, it is the second question that remains truly puzzling. Are encyclopedias simply a way of putting one's prep done? Few parents can be unaware of the occasional urgent need for an encyclopedia to meet a crisis. It is Sunday, and, by Monday morning, the child has to be written on the inventory of the vision, the Ice-age or the Boston Tea Party, perhaps on all three. Libraries are shut, real books, even if improbably available, are too long; only an encyclopedia will do. In the old days, the Oxford Junior Encyclopedia was a godsend. If one had the right volume. None of the present lot is as good, and it is going out of print. Of course it was expensive (£60 now for the whole set) but you could buy it bit by bit. Its great merit was that it did not waste words. Every article was close-packed with literature and intelligible information. This is crucially important, where what is written is read intently in hope that the whole essay may be extracted from one, or at most two, articles, with only a decent amount of padding. Neither the *Macmillan Children's Encyclopedia* nor *Black's* are anything like up to this standard.

*Macmillan's* has quite useful photographs, is arranged in fairly intelligible topics, but has a chaotic index, which, confusingly, refers to the whole book as "Our World", and has several cases of misreference to particular pages. *Black's* is fully alphabetical. It has drawings, mostly black and white, but occasionally bursting unaccountably into colour. It is best on particular

short entries about people, or old-fashioned primary-school subjects like "Tea". It has a brief, quite unintelligible page on Television, no entry for Radio, nothing on Computers, Electronics or Silicon chips. It dates itself by such phrases as "about ten years ago". It really is not worth the money, being infinitely less good than the English Larousse, whose style it partly follows.

But perhaps the compilers of encyclopedias would not agree that their aim was to do people's homework. Some address themselves to much younger children, aged from five upwards. These books are, for the most part, of an astonishingly high standard. The pictures tend to be crude and hideous, but also pointless. Why, for example, should the *Hamlyn Boys' and Girls' Encyclopedia* illustrate "The World of Art" only by a picture of a romantic-looking person painting some sandcastles, a man in a white looking suspiciously like Richard Nixon, but labelled

Leonard Bernstein, and a picture of Notre-Dame at Ronchamp, bearing the legend "Le Corbusier designed houses as 'machines for living'". It is hard, admittedly, to predict what pictures may fire the imagination of children when they are very young, beginning to handle books and turn the pages. I can just about conceive of some two or three year old loving this book for its strangeness, and its very nice old-fashioned newsagent's smell. Also the print is black and clear, and it is possible that a reluctant reader of twelve or so might like to read it right through. But it, and other similar books, make highly contradictory demands. Why should a six-year old, say, who wanted to find out how television works, think of looking up Communications? And if he did, would he be helped by a picture of the inside of a studio at Thames Television, and the opening statement "We use words when we talk"? None of the cheaper encyclopedias that I have looked at (Ward

Lock's *First Picture Encyclopedia*, the *Hamlyn Children's Encyclopedia*, Purcell's *Concise Encyclopedia*) is free from this confusion of aim, or frivolity of presentation, though, as a rule, the more expensive ones are better. Those which are based on specific questions often fall into absurdity. Who ever asked the question "What do sports consist of" in our part of the world? or "How do people make themselves look more attractive?" However, apart from its ridiculous format, the *Hamlyn Question and Answer Encyclopedia* is well illustrated and again might be extremely appealing to a late reader, who is bored by children's story books.

At the end of all these large sized books, some of which are nothing but a trap for the gullible, it is pure pleasure to come upon the *Junior Pears Encyclopedia*. Here at last the tone is grown-up, and the sense of being pompous, but detached, honest, straightforward and wise. Among the articles, most of which are quite short, are to be found great detailed lists, like an infinitely expanded back part of a schoolboy's or school girl's diary, the periodic table, makes of cars, with their insignia, ranks and medals of the armed services, the planets with the distances from the sun, Wimbledon champions since 1920, and every kind of delightful

cricket record. It has lists of foreign phrases and even a list of American expressions that might prove useful (but rather a defective one, if "cracker" means "blame", or "biscuit" means "tea", or "yard" means "den", or "yard" means "beyond"). It is altogether one from eight to the end of the world. The only thing that looked up and failed to come again, computer, (though binary numbers, these deficiencies will be corrected by an annual *Macmillan Children's Encyclopedia*, 2 volumes, £13.95, 0 7134 3376 0).

## The glory that was ...

By Michael Trend

PHILIPPA STEWART:  
Growing up in Ancient Greece.  
Batsford, £4.50.  
0 7134 3376 0

Children are endlessly fascinated by what life was like in former times, but in looking back at the past they want to have it both ways. History was both much more violent (fun) than now, and, at the same time, it was just as homely and comfortable. If asked to "recreate" some notable scene from the past, children invariably choose the bloodiest of bloodbaths; but once this craving has been met they wish to go to the past to be reassured. In a museum they will wearily troop past marble busts of the great Alexander, the coins of Imperial Rome, the lapidary decrees of the Emperors in order to spend hours gazing at the domestic exhibits. Only a pair of Roman shoes or an ancient toothpick can hope to elicit anything approaching the same enthusiastic response as an ancient corpse (preferably mummified) or a case full of instruments of torture.

The "Growing up in Ancient Greece" by Philippa Stewart is a book of this type. It has long played to both these responses. Until recently, as most of us know, history as taught in schools was the story of battles and invasions. In reaction to this, a particular habit of using this type of book to convey the most vivid and edifying homilies on how life should be correctly conducted—by instructing their children through their particular view of the past, a tendency often shared by some present-day Marxist historians.

Philippa Stewart's *Growing up in Ancient Greece* manages to avoid most of these pitfalls. She has chosen the overview approach but states clearly that it is the Classical period of Athenian history which she is mainly concerned. She does not use her subject to lecture her readers, although I did detect a constant desire to "apologize" for the ancient practice of slavery. Miss Stewart's book begins with a



Women washing at a fountain under a colonnade, taken from a vase of about 520 BC. It is one of the illustrations in *Growing up in Ancient Greece*.

brief historical introduction and then goes on to describe a Greek home, the birth of a child, the life of an Athenian boy and girl, Spartan discipline, and the sort of work that people in the ancient world undertook. She is very good at explaining how different a country Greece is from the United Kingdom, how hot it is and how poor the land is. The details are clear, but somehow they do not add up to a convincing whole.

Miss Stewart is, of course, very selective in her choice of examples but one begins to feel that the young reader of this book will go away with the idea that the Athenian man spent all morning practising his "craft" and all afternoon engaged in "democratic life-and-livelihood", while his counterpart in Sparta was busily perfecting his manly manliness and slaying Hells. ... And the poor women cooking and keeping out of the men's way all day. Reading a play

like *The Bacchae*, demonstrates how very odd ancient life would seem to us, how very unassuming; the comedies remind us of how coarse and uncomfortable we would find life in ancient Greece. But then no child wants to believe that life is, after all, ever violent or vulgar, and Miss Stewart knows her audience well. In swinging away from the faults of the popular historians of recent times we must take care not to present the past in too bland a light. One of the pictures in the book illustrates this danger well. Before us is a massive painted hall, well-lit, airy, with floating white doves a gorgeous spectacle. There is a Doric colonnade surrounding a pool, groups of people reclining on couches, a comely girl plays the harp—the whole as splendid and as fallacious a vision of the past as one could wish. The caption to this picture reads simply: "Inside a home in Athens. This is a reconstruction".

## Reviewers reviewed

By Colin Channell

ZENA SUTHERLAND:  
The Best in Children's Books  
The University of Chicago Guide to Children's Literature.  
546pp. University of Chicago Press.  
0 226 78059 7

There is an honourable American tradition of criticism of children's books, and the Center for Children's Books, established thirty-five years ago at the University of Chicago, is a prolific disseminator of this tradition. This book is a weekly bulletin, which has an international readership, aims at "evaluation and analysis of books in terms of use, appeals and literary quality". This collection of 1,400 reviews attempts to present "the best" from the five years 1973-78.

The brief introduction to this volume makes explicit the criteria by which the judgments are made. The best books have a distinctive "literary" style, we are told. The elements contributing to this style tell us a great deal about what the reviewers value: a well-constructed plot; sound characterization; pervasive themes; dialogue that flows naturally and is "appropriate to the reader's age, education and milieu". Within the terms of these declarations, the criticism succeeds. There is a good reason for this: many of the reviews but reason them is an enjoyable enterprise testing one's own opinions on the familiar, getting acquainted with the many American authors unpublished here.

The criticism follows a hallowed tradition which is familiar this side of the Atlantic: the discerning adult choosing for the child. The best British exponents have carried out this task so well for so long:

Naomi Lewis, Murgery Fisher, Brian Alderson, John Rowe Townsend. Indeed, one misses in these uniform criticisms their individuality and their idiosyncrasies. The critic of children's books needs to be a judge of quality and an analyst of technique, but, as an innovative group of British critics (Alden Chambers, Margaret Meek, Nicholas Tucker) are beginning to teach us, there are other vital functions to be served. The most important of these is the no less discerning task of seeing how books, children and writers have actually changed. We may be in need of a more comprehensive definition of "the best" than is offered here so that we may reflect new kinds of books and, more important, the interests of new readers.

The indexes in this volume indicate zealous classification and categorization. The books reviewed have been assiduously sifted for "developmental value": the popular themes ("age-mate relations", "inter-cultural understanding") may teach us something about contemporary cultural imperatives, more about what adult reviewers want to find. There is an index on "curricular uses" which tells us a great deal about the editor's implied audience. There is an index on "reading levels", matching up books to American school grades so that *The BFG*, *Blacky Book*, *Yogi for Children*, *Tolkien's Father Christmas Letters*, *Paddington* on Top and Alan Garner's *Stone Book* become bedfellows. It may be foolish to carp at such industrious literary pigeon-holing, but whose purposes does it all serve? What links these books is no arbitrary "readability" measuring post, rather that they all might be, at different times, a valued part of a child's reading experience. To set beyond superficial textual similarities to the multifarious nature of this experience is what this kind of criticism should be trying to do.

## Audience at risk

By Jeremy Treglown

KEN CAMPBELL:  
Skumpoomery  
Methuen Young Drama, £1.50.  
0 413 33910 6

PETER FLANNERY and MICK FORD:  
The Adventures of Awful Knawful  
Methuen Young Drama, £1.50.  
0 413 46630 2

Children taken to the theatre are children at risk. I don't know which is worse, *Peter Pan*, which encourages the little mites to fasten their belts to a long piece of wire and throw themselves out of an upstairs window, or a play like *Skumpoomery*, which incites them to tie up ladies in their own knickers and push them headfirst into boxes of tomatoes. If that isn't depraving and corrupting, what is?

Setting the children aside, at least a man could safely take his wife and nanny to *Peter Pan*. One couldn't be so sure about *Skumpoomery*, which is distinctly satirical, for example, in its treatment of law and order, both civil and domestic. In the very first scene a young constable is humiliatedly shown being sent off to work by his mother:

P.C. Nicholas Wibble: But all the other policemen were boys.  
Mrs Wibble: That's because they haven't got nice sandals.  
Wibble: Well why've I always got to be different?  
Mrs Wibble: It's not a case of being different, Nicholas, it's a case of being sensible. It's unhealthy to have your feet bared up inside those big clumping boots all day in the hot weather.  
Nicholas: ... What's that?  
Mrs Wibble: On your feet?

Mrs Wibble: Eggs, dribblings. Look at that. And I all nicely groomed 't yesterday morning". Well you'll just have to wear your bow-tie.  
Wibble: O no.

And so on.  
So it's obvious that you need to be careful who you go with. But for a joke night out with a group of mature adults—egg party, say—Ken Campbell's play would be hard to beat. This title is the name of a game invented by two of its characters, a Beckettian duo who are dissatisfied with their vocabulary, and hence with their surroundings, and hence with the world itself. Like the inventive Campbell himself, they want "A whole new range and catalogue of items and activities" and find it by inventing words and one inventing the item or activity, for example, "where you tip a woman's skirt off, empty a huge jelly into it, wrap it up and bathe on the head with it".

Such activities aren't appreciated by those they are done to, however, the jellyskirting's wife elsewhere, members of the police are being depicted through Campbell's good eye for oppressive turning

of phrase: "Stop that before it starts". Mrs Timbinton tells her husband some time before he takes his memorable revenge, and Sergeant Stuff, seeing that PC Wibble has been chewing his pencil, says "I want all this nastiness and sucked straight cut off by Inspector tomorrow".

It is harder to be sure whether *Peter Flannery* and *Mick Ford's Awful Knawful* works, just on the evidence of the published script. It's a hoisterous SF show, with plenty of skilful manipulation of stage tempo and some good scenes, including one in which a surgeon operates on members of the audience. It went down well in the RSC's production at the Warehouse, but the story—involving a sinister domination is rather shapeless, and good verbal gags are thin on the ground.

The main problem again, though, is that it's surely not a family show. It involves a mad professor who children until they turn out to be irredeemably anarchic. Children only get over-excited by stories like this and Campbell's. They are drawn in imaginatively, have a terrifically good time and end up over-stimulated. Sailer to take them along to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Regent's Park, is my advice.

Who is Beshlie? She is a "Traveler", that is what gypsies like to be called, though she is not, as is insinuated on the flyleaf of this book, a real gypsy. "You bin eatin' blue-brambles 'stead o' cuttin' the daisies" said her grandfather's side of the family, at least, must have led a settled existence. With long flowing skirts, a horse-drawn painted caravan packed with birds and animals, a companion called Laminic and a passionate love of wild flowers, she is just what a gypsy ought to be, a fairy-tale gypsy. What is more she can make a living out of all this because she paints. For some years Gallery Five has been printing greetings cards which Beshlie designed. Partially clad

animals—a frog in a wig, mole in trousers, a mouse in a hat—no about their paintings, but no about their lives. Her books for Gallery Five, *Wood and Shrubbery* and *Stories* were more or less forced on

More recently, Beshlie has designed a series of cards of traditional botanical illustrations. They are good, for it is in her mind, and painting of wild life that Beshlie takes her talent. The cards show one plant observed and easily recognized, accompanied by the name of the insect (commonly *Lucy* and *Lila* are the names of the insects). Now *Lucy* is a butterfly, *Lila* is a beetle. The cards are good, for it is in her mind, and painting of wild life that Beshlie takes her talent. The cards show one plant observed and easily recognized, accompanied by the name of the insect (commonly *Lucy* and *Lila* are the names of the insects). Now *Lucy* is a butterfly, *Lila* is a beetle. The cards are good, for it is in her mind, and painting of wild life that Beshlie takes her talent. The cards show one plant observed and easily recognized, accompanied by the name of the insect (commonly *Lucy* and *Lila* are the names of the insects). Now *Lucy* is a butterfly, *Lila* is a beetle. 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## Forty years on...

The following article appeared in the children's pages of the TLS for June 1, 1950, under the title "What Boys and Girls Read".

It is a natural tendency of adult human beings to impose their will on the younger of their kind—a self-tribute which academic training and function elevate to a duty. Yesterday this way of putting it would probably have seemed shocking; today it is admitted as arguable, tomorrow the tendency it stigmatises may be regarded as an outworn tenet of an obsolete educational system. Children of the future, it seems, may be allowed to shape their course of reading with our prohibition—because in spite of appearances to the contrary it will be recognized that they know better than their elders what is good for them. Such revolutionary theories, it is to be hoped, have been professed before, but the last smouldering of "crank" schools and thereby been suspect; now comes an unimpeachable authority to sanctify many such upsetting doctrines with the voice of wider experience. Mr A. J. Jenkins, who is a Lecturer in Education at the University of Manchester, recently sent out a questionnaire to some 3,000 pupils between 12 and 16 in Secondary and Senior (elementary) schools. The questionnaire was boldly comprehensive; it demanded details of every type of reading pursued outside school study books, and it was deliberately addressed to this interesting age group—interesting because apparently no one has yet successfully solved the problem of teaching English literature to it in its earlier stages.

Nobody knows better than Mr Jenkins that such investigations are apt to possess a limited value, but, nevertheless, he has used the results as a basis for a book—"What Do Boys and Girls Read?"—which everybody in contact with children would be the better for reading. Although Mr Jenkins' findings are naturally concerned with the primary effects of the evidence yielded, his conclusions join them to the roots of our social system, for he declares—and who will deny it?—that for the average child the quality of living determines the quality of reading, and that if good literature is provided, within the range of the child's comprehension, he will not exercise conscious discrimination against it. What more could be expected? If a voice is raised to demand a vote against the monstrously successful "blooms," it will not obtain Mr Jenkins' unqualified support.

Thirty years ago, on June 6, 1950, the TLS carried a notice of the appearance of the Eagle. Ten numbers of Eagle, a strip-cartoon weekly addressed to children (Hulton Press, 3d) have now appeared, and already it is possible to hail this new venture as an established success. To begin with, it has worked out an excellent formula for combining amusement and interest: the gadgeteer, the modelmaker, the sports fan, the competition addict, are catered for skilfully as simpler souls who maintain purely disinterested love of comic strips. In short, Eagle is already turning into a source of future pleasure for parents.

In addition to pictures—and here, incidentally the colour reproduction might be more pleasing—serials and features are included. The serials are straightforward adventure stories which totally avoid the didactic note so often caught elsewhere by Mr Arthur Marshall. An occasional snatch of dialogue may, it is true, give perverse pleasure to the elders.

"What is my best route to the 'varsity'?" "Route 'C', this time," answered Ray. "Have you found out anything? If so, better pass it on to me in case I get through, and you are poisoned."

In its context, however, this curious interchange does more than reflect the admitted pariahs of school education. And it seems likely that Eagle, which overtly sets itself a standard as high as can be consonant with a national circulation among children from every type of home, will perform a most valuable service by offering plenty of unpretentious entertainment and a little unobtrusive instruction without tumbling into reckless sensationalism at the other extreme or vapidity at the other. Even a Biblical narrative strip which recasts a portion of the Acts in terms, approximately, of King Solomon's Mines is more entertaining than offensive; and the final picture, showing Barnabas on horseback riding away from a Roman patrol with a halloon at his lips and which are inscribed the words: "Sentry, no action, can't stop now," rounds off one number of Eagle with high expectations of the next.

WELL, IT LOOKS LIKE A LONG WALK, DAN, OLD BOY—HOPE THE INFERIOR NATIVES ARE FRIENDLY.



Dan Dare who walked out of the lives of the devoted readers with the closure of that peerless comic (the TLS review of the numbers of Eagle is reprinted on this page) is destined to come again, but this time on our television screens with the forthcoming production of the space epic, Addicts can still satisfy their own wish with The Best of Eagle (Michael Joseph £5.95, 0 7181 1566 X) and by Marcus Morris the founder of the comic, Peter Keating in the review (October 28, 1977) of the book says of Eagle that "it was very much of its time, perhaps just a little too good to be true, a tiny bit too innocent." Last Dan's halloon makes readers fear Dan sub-Venustian cataract has perverted innocence into racial prejudice should he pointed out that Dare is quoting the infamous Soder.

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## commentary

## Against the grain

By John Creaser

Timon of Athens  
The Other Place

Two moments epitomize the best of the productions which the Royal Shakespeare Company has given at The Other Place, Stratford, in recent years. First, there is Ian McKellen—wearing an anarchic gesture at once defiant and hopelessly setting swinging the solitary lamp which shone overhead during the hurried closing minutes of *Macbeth*, so that it wildly illuminated the fight scenes and came to rest in time to pick out Malcolm and his exhausted, dispirited followers among the surrounding darkness. Secondly, Suzanne Bertish and Edward Petherbridge as Masha and Vershinin in Act 2 of *Three Sisters*, sitting a few feet apart at the very front of the stage, half turned away from the rest of the company. They waited for their tea and hardly spoke, but all the action behind them came to the audience permeated by the oppressiveness of their thwarted love.

The scenes were so strong partly because they accepted the nature of the Other Place as a shed for acting in. *Macbeth* used the naked theatricality of the setting, with all the paraphernalia visible above the actors' heads. Those productions (both, as it happens, by Trevor Nunn) created intimacy out of the cramped conditions, and with it a rapport between cast and audience strengthened by a frank acceptance of the theatre's limitations.

In the current production of *Timon of Athens* directed by Ron Daniels, however, The Other Place is merely cramped. Daniels has imported a domineering set by Chris Dyer which is fascinating as carpentry, but in theatrical dead weight. In the first half (up to Act IV Scene iii), the actors are set apart on a fustily-planked platform, and if this is meant to suggest that Timon is a miser, it is not borne out in the acting. For the second half, when Timon is in the woods, most of the platform is packed away to reveal what looks like an intricate relief-map made of wood, surrounded by two many cypresses where Timon scabbles for roots.

"Head of Shakespeare", a watercolour done by Oskar Kokoschka in 1959 as a possible poster-design for Richard Buckle's Quatercentenary Shakespeare Exhibition. Buckle has contributed it to the Covent Garden Opera House's Royal Gala Auction, being held on October 1. Among the varied lots stumped up by supporters are Elton John's multi-coloured rhinestone-encrusted bicycle, stage and costume designs by Piper, Jedrinsky, Senga, Gatcharova, Osher, Lancaster and Laura Knight, lithographs by Chagall and Hockney, the original costume worn by Nijinsky as Petrouchka, and sundry paintings and objets d'art. There are watches and brooches, salt-cellars and dessert-spoons. There is an eighteenth-century chaise longue, a collection of cards signed by Caranx, McCormack, Petruzzini, Chubb, and Melba, and a Tristan score imitated by Salvi. Lot 112 is a 1977 BMW "Nautimble", only 12,000 kilometres on the clock, and you could fill the Hockney cabinet with Lots 4 and 5: Latour 1945 C.N., Pailliac 1er Cru Classé, one bottle, and Lafite 1955 C.N., Pailliac 1er Cru Classé, three bottles.

## Knights of the upturned tea-chest

By A. N. Wilson

Launcelot and Guinevere  
Old Vic

Narrative, pure story-telling, in everything in Malory. It does not matter whether we believe what he says. He is not, technically, "a great writer". He has all the casual apparent incompetence of the brilliant raconteur, and it is this that keeps us listening or turning the pages.

Gordon Honeycombe's deft compression of the *Morte d'Arthur* began as a radio adaptation. I did not hear it, but I imagine it was excellent. He has chosen all the best bits, and in not much more than two hours conveys Malory's endearingly mixed qualities: poignancy and coarseness, holiness and triviality all bundled together at a breakneck narrative speed.

As a production for the stage, it does not quite come off. Timothy West, narrating as Malory himself, does his best, which is very good, reading at a fair speed without too much acutely "expression" in his voice. But the better he is, the more one sees that the stuff he is reading out cannot be acted. It is not merely that many of the most memorable moments—the appearance of the Grail, the endless clash of enormous battles, or the departure of the King by barge over the water—could never be done on stage. As the evening wears on, there seems to be less and less conviction between the stories and the

style which made the "certain knight that ever bare shield" seem more like a cheeky plumber, bounding into my lady's chamber when he should have been mending the cistern.

The Arthurian story, of course, is infinitely adaptable, and you can get away with more or less anything when reinterpreting it. You might get away with a suburban scum Guinevere (Maureen O'Brien). You might get away with a Sir Mordred (Philip Sully) who sounds like an understudy for Larry Grayson, or a Sir Garath (Peter Roberts) who looks as though he had just come from beating up Mods on the pier at Margate. For, surely, the history of literature in the last six hundred years has shown that the Arthurian myth can bear almost any quirky reruns. But why not get away with it doing all this with the

insistent, confident and (one realises anew by the end of the evening) brilliant voice of Malory in the background.

The trouble remains that even the most brilliant actor cannot act a narrative. A reader can be told that Launcelot was "never matched of earthly knights" and accept it quite readily. But how do you get David Sumner, as Launcelot, to do that? He has the first idea, veering from a sort of standard RSC interpretation, but it is just faintly

Rochester tercentenary. A critical symposium on the poetry of John Milton, Earl of Rochester (1647-80) is being held at Wadham College, Oxford, on September 22 and 23. Contributors include Pat Rogers, Peter Porter, Barbara Everett and Ian Fletcher, and a number of other critics and Restoration specialists will be there to discuss such topics as "Rochester and Affairs of State" and "Rochester's 'Wentworth Expressions'". There will be a tercentenary dinner, and accommodation is available. Last-minute bookings should be made with the Bursar, Wadham College, Oxford (Tel. 01865 42564).

## Oxford University Press

William Blake's Illustrations to the Poetry of Milton  
Pamela Dunbar

Blake's eight sets of Milton illustrations are miniature masterpieces, yet despite their importance they remain relatively unknown. This is the first full-length study devoted to them. It analyses each of the seventy-six plates of the sets and the dozen or so related paintings, discusses their artistic merits, and examines their relations with the texts and with Blake's own poetry. Illustrated £20

## Catalogue of Drawings by Camille Pissarro

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The collection of Pissarro drawings in the Ashmolean Museum is the largest in the world. This catalogue, published to coincide with the 150th anniversary of the artist's birth, provides detailed entries for each drawing. The collection's strength is the fact that it contains sheets dating from every decade of Pissarro's working life. Illustrated £40

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Robert M. Grant

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Islamic Council of EuropeThe Islamic Council of Europe was  
founded in May 1973 with the object  
of coordinating the promotion of  
Islamic activities in Europe and  
particularly of explaining Islam to  
the West. It is not to be expected,  
therefore, that its publications  
would dwell on what, in modern  
jargon, are termed the negative ele-  
ments of Islam; rather they would  
emphasize the virtues of that  
religion. Reading these publications  
one is impressed by the (in Muslim  
terms) strongly optimistic assump-  
tions which run through them; that  
Western civilization has failed to  
the modern world; that com-  
munist offers no reasonable  
alternative; and that the way is  
clear for the reception of the uni-  
versal message of Islam.Islam: Its Meaning and Message  
is a selection from the writings  
of some eminent contemporary  
Muslim scholars. It was first pub-  
lished in 1974 and in the second  
edition some errors have been  
removed. It is divided into four  
parts, dealing with the Islamic out-  
look on life, Muhammad and the  
Qur'an, Islamic institutions, and  
contemporary Muslim history. It provides a con-  
cise introduction to several  
strands in recent Muslim thinking.Muslim Communities in non-  
Muslim States examines the prob-  
lems of the third of all Muslims  
who live under non-Muslim govern-  
ments. Most of the writers of the  
papers contained in it are pre-  
occupied with general considera-  
tions and the treatment of specific  
countries is brief. Attention is  
drawn to the possibilities of the  
assimilation of Muslims and a pro-  
gramme of action to avoid the  
eventuality is sketched out, includ-  
ing the preservation of Muslim  
Personal Law and the control of  
the education of Muslim children.The Challenge of Islam is a selec-  
tion of the papers presented at an  
international Muslim conference  
organized by the Islamic Council  
in 1976. The papers are arranged in  
three sections dealing with the faith  
of Muslims, law and institutions,  
and the "Challenge of Islam", that  
is, those Islamic ideals which are  
perceived to present better goals  
for the world than those  
prevailing, especially in the West. This  
book is not suitable for those with  
writers presume that their readers  
are acquainted with many aspects of  
the religion.The Muslim World and the  
Future Economic Order is the pro-  
duct of another international con-  
ference, held in London in 1977.  
The papers are divided into three  
parts: the Perspective, in which  
Islam and the new world economic  
order, which includes a substantial  
Muslim world, the largest and most  
interesting section, which contains  
industrialization, agriculture, oil,  
trade and banking. The lecture form  
in which the papers were originally  
delivered, is retained; revision  
would have produced a more read-  
able book.There is, however, some instruc-  
tive discussion of the problems of  
the modern economy, notably in  
determining what should be the  
role of the state, given the exis-  
tence of Muslim rules on taxation  
and private property, and in decid-  
ing what should be the function of  
the banking system, given the  
Islamic prohibition on interest. The  
book is a valuable contribution to the  
debate on the development of Islamiceconomic links through trade prefer-  
ences and capital investment is also  
considered. In the light of the  
determined efforts by some Muslim  
countries to give a larger place to  
Islam in their public life this section  
is worthy of attention.The three major criticisms of  
these four books are that they deal  
too much with the ideal world of  
Islam, that they are too preoccupied  
with theoretical discussion and give  
insufficient attention to ascertaining  
the facts in particular situations  
and that they crumble too often with  
a distorted version of Western  
Western hegemony may frighten  
Muslims but they are unlikely to  
appear convincing to Westerners.  
Having said that one should also  
say that these four books do pro-  
vide helpful insights into the in-  
equality and energy with which  
Muslims approach the possibilities  
of their situation and their relations  
with the world.

NRIEMIA LEVITZON (Editor):

Conversion to Islam  
272pp. Holmes and Meier. £14.95.  
0 3419 0343 3This volume is the outcome of a  
seminar held at the School of  
Oriental and African Studies, Uni-  
versity of London, in 1972-73. The  
subject is the way in which Islam  
has spread since its first appearance  
in seventh-century Arabia. There  
are twelve essays concerned with  
particular areas—one each on  
Arabia, Iran, Anatolia, the Indian  
subcontinent and China, two on  
Africa, South East Asia and four  
on Africa, South East Asia and  
the Balkans, Central Asia and the  
land South East Asia—and the  
essays are too diverse in their  
approach to the subject to enable  
direct comparisons to be easily  
made.Nevertheless many interesting  
points appear in the papers and  
some of these are considered by  
the editor in his introduction. Lev-  
itzon surveys the source materials  
considered the agents of Islamic  
expansion—nomads, rulers and gov-  
ernment officials, traders and sufis;  
and comments on the fortunes of  
the converts. The papers confirm  
that forcible conversion was rare  
and that the temptations presented  
by the possibility of sharing in Mus-  
lim political powers or culture or  
simply enjoying the material bene-  
fits of Muslim status were a much  
more influential factor in decisions  
to convert. The principal distinc-  
tion which emerged in the discus-  
sion was that between conversion  
by conquest and conversion in  
areas where no element of formal  
conversion was present; in the latter  
areas the trader and the sufi came  
into their own. The helpful bilin-  
gual will facilitate further study  
of the topic.

CARTER V. FINDLEY:

Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman  
Empire  
The Sublime Porte 1789-1922  
488pp. Clarendon; Princeton Uni-  
versity Press. £13.90.  
0 691 05288 3The nineteenth-century Ottoman  
reform movement was directed by  
the central government. In this  
valuable scholarly study Carter V.  
Findley describes and analyses the  
development of the chief agency of  
the reform movement, the civil  
bureaucracy. In the first part of the  
book he examines the broad lines of  
the development of the bureaucracy  
prior to the new reforms of Solim  
II and in the latter part discusses  
the nineteenth-century changes in  
detail. He argues that the main fea-  
ture was the rise of one section of  
the old bureaucratic system—the  
scribal service—to a position in  
which it was the dominant element  
in the new civil bureaucracy. He  
sees this as an evolutionary process  
in response to the demands of  
bureaucratic modernization and  
of Ottoman forms with Western  
models. The mid-nineteenth century  
reformers regarded as the high point of  
the civil bureaucracy; during the last  
years of the century there was a reversion to theauthoritarian government of the  
Sultan (although associated with  
the important reforms in the  
civil service) under Abdülhamid II.In the early twentieth century the  
rise of the Young Turks saw the  
beginnings of an attempt to adapt  
the bureaucracy to meet the needs  
of a wider political system that in-  
cluded parliaments and political  
parties. Nevertheless, the old style  
bureaucracy continued to dominate  
the administration until the end of  
the Empire; only with the appoint-  
ment of Talaat in 1917 could one say  
that the office of Grand Vizier had  
become a political appointment.  
Professor Findley's conclusions  
tend to endorse the views which  
scholars have formed of this pro-  
cess. The strength of his book lies  
in the patient documentation of  
these changes. His work is based  
on a wide range of sources includ-  
ing Western and Ottoman archival  
sources and it includes a compre-  
hensive bibliography.

MOHAMMED ALMANA:

Arabia Unified  
A Portrait of Ibn Saud  
328pp. Hutchinson. £6.95 (paper-  
back, £3.95).  
0 09 014610 8From 1926 until 1935 the author  
served as translator at the court  
of King Abd al-Aziz Ibn Saud, the  
founder of the modern kingdom of  
Saudi Arabia. In this biography of  
Abd al-Aziz he has sensitively given  
the greatest prominence to the  
years of which he had a peculiarly  
intimate knowledge. There are  
valuable accounts of Ibn Saud's re-  
lations with the Ikhwan and with  
some comments on the early  
development of the oil indus-  
try, and a valuable description of  
the organization of the Court.There are also some observations  
on individuals including the influ-  
ential Finance Minister, Sheikh  
Abdullah Sulaiman and St John  
Philby. Mohammed Almanan came  
of Arab descent from British India, full  
hostile to Britain. One would have  
thought this might have endea-  
voured him to Philby but seemingly it did  
not. However, Philby is almost the  
only personality about whom the  
author appears to have had reserva-  
tions. Others are described in terms  
which are too good to be true.  
Great men his Arabian contempor-  
aries may have been but worthless  
they were not and the row times  
which sufficed Almanan's portrait of  
Abd al-Aziz and Saudi Arabia  
book in fairness one should men-  
tion that the book is the product  
of the author's memories forty  
years after the events.

MARILYN ROBINSON WALDMAN:

Toward a Theory of Historical  
Narrative  
A Case Study in Perso-Islamic  
Historiography  
214pp. Columbus: Ohio State Uni-  
versity Press.  
0 8142 0297 7Although it is now twenty years  
since the appearance of that pion-  
eering volume, *Historians of the Middle  
East* (edited by B. Lewis and P. M.  
Holt), the art of Muslim history  
writing remains a comparatively  
unstudied subject. The present  
book is a study of the work of the  
Ghaznavid historian, Abul Fazi  
Bayhaqi (c. 966-1077) forms a sig-  
nificant new contribution. The core  
of the book is an analysis of Bay-  
haqi's history of the Ghaznavids, a  
work planned and completed in  
thirty volumes but of which only  
just over four volumes, containing  
some seven hundred pages dealing  
with the reign of Mas'ud (1030-41),  
survive. Marilyn Waldman, whose  
element of that useful but un-  
attractive "Islamicate" to  
describe matters pertaining to  
rather than deriving from Islam  
betrays her as a disciple of the late  
Marshall Hodgson, analyses in detail  
both the content and the style of  
Muslim historical writings.In a rather more controversial  
section she attempts to develop a  
new method for the analysis of  
Muslim historical works, claiming  
with some justice that many  
scholars have preferred to regardsuch chronicles as mere  
historical information rather  
than as histories in their own right.  
her choices of speech are  
derived from the work of  
Louis Prati, in which the  
author is a verbal display, seem-  
ing to take a hammer to a butterfly.

N. C. MOOMFORD (Editor):

Middle East Studies and  
A Felicitous Volume for  
211pp. Mansell. £21.50.  
0 7201 1512 4In 1979 J. D. Pearson, the  
loved librarian, bibliographer  
scholar, retired from the  
Bibliography with reference to  
Africa in the University of  
London. Before his elevation to  
chair he had been for over  
years Librarian of the School  
of Oriental and African Studies,  
in part in the development of  
the East Librarian, both in  
United Kingdom and outside  
in the preparation of bibliographies  
and in the preparation of bibliographies  
Index Librorum, a listing of  
cal articles, references to the  
Islamic world, is only one of the  
works for which he has been  
responsible.This volume of essays by his  
friends and colleagues marks  
esteem in which he is held.  
The range and variety of the  
essays indicate the breadth of his  
interests. There are pieces  
on libraries, including those of  
Durham, on bibliography, on  
scholarly subjects. Approached  
enough, in the light of Prof.  
Pearson's own deserved reputation  
as a bibliographer, they include an  
essay by Edward Ullendorff on  
Ethiopian good food guides.There are various themes in this  
supposedly hard-handed occidental  
admiration of Ibn Khaldun which  
Cheddadi singles out: he is accused  
of being ambitious, an opportunist,

DR AHMAD SHAHBAZI:

The Gospel according to Islam  
90pp. New York: Yarni Press.  
\$6.95.  
0 533 04142 2In the Qur'an there are  
ninety-three verses which refer to  
Jesus. Ahmad Shahbazi has  
these verses and presents them  
accompanied by extensive notes  
drawn from the Christian Gospel.  
At an important element in the  
view which Muslims have of  
Christianity these verses are worth  
studying. To offer them as a  
Gospel, a Muslim alternative to the  
existing four accounts of the life  
of Jesus, as the author does,  
betokens a lack of understanding  
of the contribution of Christianity  
to Islam and of Christianity itself.

JACQUES BERQUE:

L'Islam au défi  
311pp. Paris: Gallimard.This discursive book by one of  
the foremost and most controversial  
French writers on Islam contains a  
series of reflections on the possible  
future of Muslim society. It is divided  
into three sections. In the first  
Berque examines the experience of  
Islam from his childhood in Algeria  
onwards, comments on the work of  
other Orientalists, reflects on  
Muslim history and geography, and  
poses the main problems with which  
he is concerned—how change may  
be legitimized in a system which  
is unchanging, and the conflict  
between Modernism and Traditionism.  
In the second section ("Retours") Ber-  
que looks at some of the sources  
of the Islamic faith and at the  
message of the Qur'an. In the third  
section, "Projections", he  
examines the current debate about  
Islam and in his final chapter  
confesses that he sees Islam as an  
eventually universal system  
upon rejuvenating a tired world.Berque's book has all the features  
which one has come to expect  
from him: the prose is superbly  
clear and exciting which on some  
occasions is revealed to contain  
many mysteries; the idiosyncratic  
opinions; and the breadth of erudition  
and experience which enable him  
to give freshness to old con-  
troversies by citing unfamiliar  
sources and gathering novel and  
illuminating parallels.

## ISLAM

## Talking with Tamerlane

By Ernest Gellner

## IBN KHALDUN:

Le Voyage d'Occident et d'Orient  
Traduit de l'arabe et présenté par  
Abdellatif Cheddadi  
331pp. Paris: Sindbad.Ibn Khaldun is perhaps the greatest  
sociologist who ever lived; certainly  
he was the greatest of his age, and  
the acutest analysis there has been  
of Muslim society. This being so,  
it is astonishing that no translation  
of his autobiography should be  
available, which would make it  
accessible to Western readers, other  
than the incomplete and virtually  
unreadable one by Baron William  
MacGuckin de Slane, published in  
1844. Thus Abdellatif Cheddadi, a  
young Moroccan scholar working in  
Paris, is to be congratulated on this  
elegant, readable and highly in-  
teresting French translation and pre-  
sentation of Ibn Khaldun's *apologia  
pro vita sua*.Cheddadi does not merely re-  
translate Ibn Khaldun's account of  
his own life and set it in context;  
his interesting introduction also  
criticizes the Western appreciation  
of Ibn Khaldun, which Cheddadi  
suspects of being patronizing. In  
one of his footnotes, he quotes  
Arnold Toynbee's adulation of Ibn  
Khaldun's work as "a philosophy  
of history which is undoubtedly the  
greatest work of its kind which has  
yet been created by any mind in  
any time or place..." but which  
"shines more brightly by contrast  
with the foil of darkness against  
which it flashes out".Clearly, Cheddadi feels that Toyn-  
bee's admiration for Ibn Khaldun  
is history which is undoubtedly the  
greatest work of its kind which has  
yet been created by any mind in  
any time or place..." but which  
"shines more brightly by contrast  
with the foil of darkness against  
which it flashes out".In the world which Ibn Khaldun  
knew and understood, significant  
political change was brought about  
only by tribal cohesion (there being  
no other kind). Hence, as he  
observed to Tamerlane, the world  
was destined to be ruled alternately  
by Arabs and by Turks (which  
includes Tartars), who were  
numerous and had cohesion. Not-  
withstanding Alexander and Caesar,a political intriguer, even a Con-  
dottiero, of writing an autobio-  
graphy which tells us little of the  
inner man, but a great deal of the  
political history of his time; of  
highlighting by his genius the  
mediocrity of his time; and above  
all, of documenting in his analysis  
the stagnation or stability of the  
social order which he knew and  
in which he was an active partici-  
pant, at the very moment when the  
Renaissance was beginning the  
transformation of Europe, a possi-  
bility which Ibn Khaldun did not  
suspect.One can sympathize with Ched-  
dadi's irritation at this presumed  
condescension, and yet feel that  
his implicit repudiation of the con-  
ventional Western assessment of Ibn  
Khaldun is misguided. Having read  
his excellent translation, I find that  
all in all it confirms and indeed  
reinforces the old interpretation of  
Ibn Khaldun. One's admiration  
remains as great as ever, and this  
is not a snide, surreptitious means  
of denigrating anyone else. Ibn  
Khaldun did indeed observe and  
interpret a world which, in its  
general features, he considered  
stable (or stagnant, whichever one  
prefers). Most societies have been  
fairly stable and if we restrict the  
term revolution to profound and  
irreversible social transformation,  
I suspect that only two such have  
ever occurred (the neolithic and the  
industrial). Giambattista Vico also  
stood out against an age which  
lacked brilliance and was stagnant  
(post Counter-Reformation southern  
Europe) was surely the equal of the  
Maghrib in stagnation/stability, and  
was also due similarly to be re-  
awakened much later by a national-  
ist revival; are we not to be  
allowed to say so without being  
accused of anti-Islamic prejudice?In the world which Ibn Khaldun  
knew and understood, significant  
political change was brought about  
only by tribal cohesion (there being  
no other kind). Hence, as he  
observed to Tamerlane, the world  
was destined to be ruled alternately  
by Arabs and by Turks (which  
includes Tartars), who were  
numerous and had cohesion. Not-  
withstanding Alexander and Caesar,he eagerly added, warning to his  
theme in the exposition of his  
well-known *Diwan*, who would  
conquer the Maghrib, who would  
compare the Europeans to the  
Turks? The idea was laughable.Within the lucidly stated and  
valid premisses which set the poli-  
tical rules of the game in the world  
he knew, the argument was per-  
fectly valid, and one's opinion of  
Ibn Khaldun would be in no way  
enhanced if he had been less clear  
about it. As for the other customary  
observations about him, they seem  
to me confirmed but irrelevant. He  
did not bare his intimate self in his  
autobiography, and if he suffered  
inner torments, which I doubt, he  
did not bother to tell us about them.Similarly, it seems to be the case  
that Ibn Khaldun's historical narra-  
tive is sometimes elliptical and can  
on occasion only be made coherent  
by filling in the premisses which he  
omits, in that naive style  
characteristic of the age. It also  
seems to me true that while he  
was a superbly critical and rational  
observer of society and politics, his  
critical spirit did not carry over  
into other spheres, in which he  
appears to have been simply a man  
of his time. It always puzzles me  
to see how much Ibn Khaldun's  
scholarship is directed to areas in  
which he was merely as other men  
are, rather than to those in which  
he was unrivalled and unique.  
Finally, I should like to hold it  
against him that his conduct as a  
politician was similar to that of  
other politicians of his time?Above all, why should we wish to  
pretend otherwise, in defiance of  
the evidence he himself provides  
with such admirable candour?From the viewpoint of the gen-  
eral reader, there is no doubt that  
the most interesting part of the  
autobiography is that which  
deals with Ibn Khaldun's encoun-  
ters and conversations with Tame-  
rlane—when the greatest scholar  
of his age met the greatest conqueror  
of the age met face to face.Towards the end of the year 1401,  
Ibn Khaldun found himself in Dam-  
ascus in the train of Sultan Faraj,  
while Tamerlane's army wasconquering the citizens of Damas-  
cus and eventually handed the city  
over to pillage. Women were carried  
off and what was left of the city  
was burnt. The Grand Mosque itself was  
burnt, the fire reached its roof and  
the molten lead ran down. The  
horror of the spectacle was extreme,  
Ibn Khaldun noted, looking up from  
drafting his report for Tamerlane,  
and he adds that the cause of  
events is in the hands of God, who  
governs His kingdom as He pleases.There was a curious sequel. Ibn  
Khaldun evidently did his best to  
secure mercy for the clerical and  
administrative staff of the Sultan  
who had fallen into Tamerlane's  
power. The Great Khane replied  
he announced to Ibn Khaldun that  
he wanted to buy his beautiful mule.  
But who am I to do business with  
a mule like you, Sir? Ibn Khaldun  
exclaimed, as far as I know  
there is no record of any com-  
mercial transaction between Aristotle  
and Alexander, or between Hegel and  
Napoleon. Tamerlane naturally had  
his way, and Ibn Khaldun never saw  
his mule again, as he wryly observed.  
But after various adventures on his  
way back to Egypt, which included  
being robbed and stripped naked by  
bedouins, he did receive a sum of  
money from Tamerlane in payment.Ibn Khaldun praised God for his  
deliverance, and promptly set down  
to write for the ruler of the Maghrib  
a really excellent report on the  
Mongols, in which he notes  
their similarity to the bedouins and  
the fact that Tamerlane attains his  
ends by intelligence and intellect  
curiousity, not by magic (as rumour  
had it). Here at least there was a  
statesman who knew how to make  
good use of intellectuals. He reports  
the fact that he saw Tamerlane daily  
for thirty-five days and that he  
secured a pardon (which proved  
ineffectual in the end) for the  
inhabitants of Damascus, and he  
also re-tells the story of the mule.  
He forgets to mention the fact that  
he had just supplied Tamerlane with  
a presumably just as brilliant, and  
rather longer, intelligence report on  
the Maghrib. One can hope that  
the library of some Mongolian  
Jansary still contains the Mos-  
golian translation of Ibn Khaldun's  
report?As it happens Tamerlane did not  
come to use it; he did not even  
invade Egypt, let alone the Maghrib,  
and thus the Arabs and Field-  
Marshal Montgomery remain the  
only people to have effected a land  
conquest of Ifriqiya from the East.  
But Ibn Khaldun claims to have  
contradicted Tamerlane on a point  
of genealogy, concerning a Mesopo-  
tavian personage to whom he said  
he was connected by marriage. This  
daring act of intellectual defiance  
might have ended ill for him, but  
Tamerlane's attention was distracted  
by news of the final surrender of  
the city. While Ibn Khaldun took  
time off to prepare his intelligence  
report on the Maghrib, Tamerlane

## FIRST INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION OF

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I. RESOURCES FOR ISLAMIC  
STUDIES IN THE WEST

- (1) Scope and accessibility of materials with reference to:  
(a) India Office Library Mr. Martin Mohr  
(b) Public Record Office Mr. M. Roper  
(c) Bibliographical Access:  
(i) Index Islamicus Professor J. D. Pearson  
(ii) Encyclopaedia of Islam Professor C. E. Bosworth  
(Prof. Bosworth will be away in the U.S. but he has kindly confirmed sending his paper.)

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WEDNESDAY, 24th September, 1980

(2.30-4.30 p.m.)

II. PROBLEMS OF ACQUISITION AND  
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- (i) Arabic printing in Europe (illustrated with slides). Dr. Y. H. Safadi  
(ii) Conservation and Restoration of Manuscript Material (illustrated with slides). Dr. Z. H. Zaidi and Mrs. Farveen Zaidi  
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## Revolution in the Round City

By Edmund Bosworth

JACOB LASSNER:  
*The Shaping of Abbasid Rule*  
350pp. Princeton University Press.  
£13.90.  
0 691 05281 6

So much less is known about almost the whole span of Islamic history, compared with Classical and European history, that orthodox views of interpretation have not on the whole been able to secure in Islamic studies the formerly entrenched positions of, say, the Whig interpretation of post-1689 British history or the post-1783 American history. Even so, one of the cataclysms of early Islamic history, the revolutionary movement of 746-50 AD which terminated the Umayyad dynasty of caliphs and substituted for them another Arab, distinctly related family, the Abbasids, did have its received interpretation for many decades.

Briefly, this change was viewed, under the influence of nineteenth-century nationalism and the role of ethnic tensions in the dissolution of multi-national empires and confederations into separate states, as the transition from a caliphate directed by a wholly Arab, tribally-

organized, military aristocracy to a much broader-based state, automatic in ethos but redeemed by the sharing of power between Arabs and the client peoples, above all the Persians. The new regime could thus be characterized as an eastwards-facing one, especially since the capital was now moved from Levantine Syria to Baghdad, and could be regarded as approximating moral and more to the classic oriental despotisms delineated for us by the sinologist Karl Wittfogel.

Revisionism has been at work here, as elsewhere, for some time, and the Abbasid revolutionary movement is now seen as essentially an inter-Arab upheaval which, among its Arab settlers (assimilated in varying degrees to the indigenous Persian population) who provided the necessary military backing for the conspirators of the Abbasid family.

Jacob Lassner stands within these recent attitudes, whose validity now seems, in the light of new Arabic sources which have come to light in the past two decades, incontrovertible, although he is well aware of the need for his reassessment.

Already well known for his research on the topography of medieval Baghdad, he now presents a series of connected studies of the formative period for the new regime, the caliphates of al-Saffah and al-Mansur (749-75) with further investigations of the

origins and planning of the Round City of Baghdad, incidentally dismissing firmly the incursions of certain art historians concerning the cosmic significance of its layout.

With a sure mastery of the highly detailed, but often ambiguous and allusive Arabic sources, he examines such questions as, how al-Mansur managed to succeed his father in 754 when he had paternal uncles (the 'umayyids') and a cousin far more militarily experienced than himself and equipped with their own forces (an intriguing discussion here of the baghographical and pseudo-prophetic literature which later grew up to justify al-Mansur's success); the delicate balance in the new administration between the old guard of revolutionaries (the 'Tawsiqs', in the analogy Lassner tellingly makes), the numerous 'new men' who were eventually the backbone of the regime and its military system and, with their Persian or Central Asian backgrounds, were largely responsible for the older view that the Abbasid caliphate was a reconstruction of the old Sassanid Iranian world-empires; and the precise nature of the Khurasanian praetorians. The author is not afraid to enter the lists on the vexed question of the juridical status and the ethnic backgrounds of these *mawalli* or 'new men', one which has

recently much exercised scholars, and which is in part the subject of Patricia Crone's *Slaves on Horses*.

In all these questions Dr Lassner's approach is judiciously and carefully documented, his conclusions are usually solid and speculative, persuasive. The book is an instance of the meticulous examination of the minutiae of a small span of history which can provide a foundation for interpretation of events subsequent centuries when, as al-Mansur's rule, the fall of the ruling family to keep its order, the propensity of the new order to stimulate rather than restrain, and, about all the details of professionalization within the army all signalled the high decline of 'Abbasid rule'.

Such subject-matter does not scope for literary elegance, but minor criticisms may be made. Of Ch Pellissier's monograph *Muqaffa*, 'conscience' (Paris 1976) would have been a useful addition, connected with al-Mansur's was not a 'polyhistor' as Marwan II was, and a member of the Saffahid branch of the Umayyad dynasty, but of Marwan I himself.

ing these questions the idea of multi-formity of Islam may be relevant, though in a novel way, its resurgence or revival of Islam in the undoubted fact of the last decade, and is best understood as a reaction of countless ordinary Muslims to various subtle pressures from the politically dominant Westerners with whom they have to check by jowl. This resurgence has strengthened the hands of the so-called clerics (who are only backward-looking and conservative) to recover the power they lost during the last hundred years, and they have guided the revival movement to demand a restoration of medieval forms.

What is it important to Westerners to realize in this 'clerical' and other conservative who have become so prominent in the media are not the whole of Islam. Among the Muslim professional classes and especially among the statesmen who have had responsibility for governing their countries, there are many who remain devoted Muslims but who quietly away to adapt their religious beliefs and practices to the circumstances of today. The West should not forget about such people, since the idea of the future is likely to come more to them than to the conservatives.

Two problems are admirably clarified in this work: whether or not Russian expansion after the Russo-Turkish war was conducted according to a long-range, carefully devised plan; and how far, and often, officials on the spot may have taken initiatives in excess of St Petersburg's policies and intentions.

Skilful elucidation of sources, from which nothing relevant to the book's thesis is excluded, has resulted in reconstruction of every step of Russian penetration of the Caucasus south to the 'natural' barrier, the River Aras. In this process a main theme is proved, that to accept the idea of a colossal moving forward according to a deeply conceived ineluctable plan, dating from long before the event, is to be misled by a myth as false as the legend of Peter the Great's 'Will to Power'. It is a useful myth for those who might see its advantages in bemusingly intended prey, but Muriel Atkins' debunking of it is also helpful. She shows the advance to have been hesitant, often responsive to unforeseen events, and by its authors due to immature rather than sound planning, and subject to swift changes of direction when freshly formed plans were rejected, as Paul did his mother's, predecessors' Caucasian schemes, with which they seldom agreed.

Moreover, the Caucasian adventure was often peripheral to other affairs. It could be a useful diversion, to distract the Turks, for example, from the Balkans. It could assume importance if another Power seemed likely to dislodge the Russian influence near the Caspian. It could help to screen consolidation in the Crimea; or be a play in the arrangements at Tilsit. It only gradually became unreluctant.

A war interrupted by uneasy, bickering armistices, it lasted nearly half a century before the colossal, consolidated new frontier for Russia would seem not to be long-term planning, but an attitude towards time, given enough, Russia will get there, especially if the belief prevails that she is bound to in the end.

## Turning to Mecca

By Martin Hinds

RICHARD W. BULLIET:  
*Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period*  
An Essay in Quantitative History.  
184pp. Harvard University Press. £9.  
0 674 17035 0

The Arab conquests in the Fertile Crescent, Egypt and Iran in the seventh century issued in rule by an Arab conquering caste held together by ethnic, linguistic and religious ties. Islam in the Umayyad period (661-750) was primarily an Arab affair, being the ethnic religion of a ruling minority in conquered territories where the confessions of the majority were Christian (in Iran) and Zoroastrian (in Mesopotamia).

Many such dictionaries are exacting, with a total number of entries sometimes estimated in the order of one million; the total number of individuals represented by these entries is a matter of guesswork at the moment, but can hardly be less than about 25,000. For example, the *biographical History of Baghdad* by Khafiz al-Baghdadi contains nearly 8,000 entries, while there are about 10,000 names spanning the first Islamic centuries (the seventh century AD to the sixteenth) in the compendious *Fragments of gold concerning men of old* by the seventeenth-century Syrian Ibn al-Imad. Professor Bulliet has drawn on a representative selection of these works, notably that of Ibn al-Imad, in his search for timetables of conversion in the major parts (six, by

the non-Muslim community in each of the main areas of what was by then the Islamic world. The focus is on 'social conversion', the version to a social identity confessionally defined, and not on formal conversion (there being in any case no equivalent of a baptismal rite or vidual). One major underlying factor in the social institutions of the Islam to which they had converted, and the work as a whole 'attempts to tie together the histories of parts of the medieval Islamic world that are more commonly treated as discrete entities by means of a number of quite speculative hypotheses based upon and inspired by a close examination of certain quantifiable aspects of medieval Arabic sources'.

These quantifiable aspects are to be found in the bulky genre of the Muslim biographical dictionary. Many such dictionaries are exacting, with a total number of entries sometimes estimated in the order of one million; the total number of individuals represented by these entries is a matter of guesswork at the moment, but can hardly be less than about 25,000. For example, the *biographical History of Baghdad* by Khafiz al-Baghdadi contains nearly 8,000 entries, while there are about 10,000 names spanning the first Islamic centuries (the seventh century AD to the sixteenth) in the compendious *Fragments of gold concerning men of old* by the seventeenth-century Syrian Ibn al-Imad.

Professor Bulliet has drawn on a representative selection of these works, notably that of Ibn al-Imad, in his search for timetables of conversion in the major parts (six, by

his division) of the medieval Islamic world.

He starts with biographical data relating to Muslims in Iran and more specifically with genealogies where an identifiable Persian name (as distinct from an Arabic, Muslim, biblical-cum-Quranic name) occurs as that of the earliest of a man's named forebears; such an occurrence, he believes (with some justification), marks the point at which conversion to Islam took place in that man's line.

On the basis of 469 Iranian genealogies of this kind, he finds that the pattern of Iranian conversion to Islam in medieval times almost exactly matches the shape of the bell-curve and logistic S-curve familiar to students of innovation diffusion (and, for that matter, the proposition that such curves and the standard distribution indicated by them, may represent the pattern of conversion not only in Iran but also in other parts of the Islamic world, and that, conversely, may be of even broader significance for students of religious conversion and mass ideological change); that is to say, the putative bell-curves of the Islamic world, and the pattern of conversion not only in Iran but also in other parts of the Islamic world, and that, conversely, may be of even broader significance for students of religious conversion and mass ideological change); that is to say, the putative bell-curves of the Islamic world, and the pattern of conversion not only in Iran but also in other parts of the Islamic world, and that, conversely, may be of even broader significance for students of religious conversion and mass ideological change); 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